TALES FROM FAR AND NEAR

EDITED BY
ERNEST RHYS
AND
C. A. DAWSON-SCOTT

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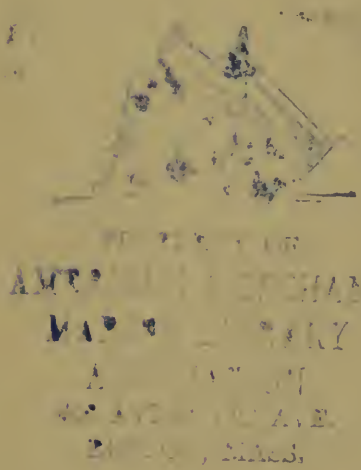

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TALES FROM FAR AND NEAR

Edited by

ERNEST RHYS AND C. A. DAWSON-SCOTT

MAINLY HORSES

26 ADVENTURE STORIES: OLD AND NEW
BY TWENTY AND SIX AUTHORS.

26 MYSTERY STORIES: OLD AND NEW.
BY TWENTY AND SIX AUTHORS.

28 HUMOROUS STORIES: OLD AND NEW.
BY TWENTY AND EIGHT AUTHORS.

29 LOVE STORIES: OLD AND NEW.
BY TWENTY AND NINE AUTHORS.

23 STORIES. BY TWENTY AND THREE AUTHORS.

31 STORIES. BY THIRTY AND ONE AUTHORS.

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C. A. DAWSON-SCOTT

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FOREWORD

The leisurely tale of the writers, old-style, has become the short story of to-day in which nearly everything depends on narrative speed and the climacteric sensation. Original tale-tellers, such as Walter de la Mare, A. E. Coppard, Edith Wharton, Mary Austin, are still with us—writers who take their own way, who care about atmosphere and the imaginative uses of reality, but they are rare. The standardized magazine tale is cut to a close pattern, and the writer must accept the editor's verdict deciding its market measure. Long practice and an instinct for the veering popular vogue enable him to judge at once whether the story will attract his readers. All the same he makes bad shots and we find conscientious novelists confessing they write with their left hands when concocting what they believe will prove a negotiable magazine story.

When it comes to a book of short stories which is expected to have a longer life the range is less restricted by fashion. Between its covers, if it is to be more than a packet of literary cigarettes, should be found new tales in the current mode—"written from the nerves," as you might say—old stories written from the life but tinged with romance—meaning by romance not Victorian love but that circumstantial reality which can make the grass in the field luminous under the lovers' feet.

A short story to be lastingly good should not be all on the surface. It should have the power to call up the region, also the race-memory behind the reading man or woman, to cause them to identify themselves with the character, be it a Heathcliff, a Nejdanoff, or a Gavroche. Some stories such as Hawthorne's "Ethan Brand," or the Celtic tale in this volume, "The Dream of Rhonabwy," unfold layer after layer of buried associations, place-asso-

ciations, and reveal the colors of another life, one that has been long buried behind that of to-day but which their master strokes of illusion can evoke. The very inconclusion of such adds to the value of the page.

In these tales from far and near we have assembled narratives of many varieties set down by writers whom their own lands have delighted to honor. Through the eyes of these writers we see the countries of which they speak, and more than the country. By the contrast or by change of tempo we are stimulated, tantalized and left questioning and what we took for a blank wall shows opening doors. From Maxim Gorki's tale of a Death Lottery, we turn to Knut Hamsun's quiet irony and the flashing descriptions of Halidé Edib. Chinaman, Afghan, Scandinavian, each have their place.

All sorts and conditions of fiction-in-brief! If the reader closes the book convinced that the popular magazine story leaves the door of his imagination shut, while these tales open it on widening vistas, our pleasant labor of compilation will not have been undertaken in vain.

E. R.
C. A. D. S.

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PAUL SELVER, for "An Attempt at Murder," by Karel Capek.

JEAN WICK, for "A Woman of the Benni Fuhara," by Achmed Abdullah.

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TALES FROM FAR AND NEAR

A WOMAN OF THE BENNI FUHARA

By Achmed Abdullah

FOR the second time a knocking at the outer door, five flights down, splintered the silence. It filled the two with a terror that was intensified by the brown pall of darkness.

They had not dared to light the candle stuck in a bottle since the night a week earlier that they—Mansur-el-Andalusi, sheik of the Benni Fuhara tribe, and Athelba, his wife—had come to Algiers. Hugging the shadows, flitting ghostly across the moon-white squares, they had sought refuge in this immense, ramshackle, deserted house.

Formerly it had been a caravanserai for Saharan traders, but, killed by railway competition, it was disintegrating into mud and dust. It stood on the outskirts of the town between the reek and riot of the ghetto and the grey peace of the Moslem cemetery, a grimy place containing only broken furniture and, in the cupboards, heaps of mouldering rags. On the cobwebby ceilings were cheeping bats. *Tchk-shk-tck* told of scorpions scurrying into holes. A mousing owl rustled in the thatch of the roof and flies buzzed over the heaps of refuse.

"An abode of nothingness," said the woman.

"But safer for us than the mercy of the Benni Hossayn," her husband had answered. "They would sell our heads to the French as gladly as a Christian butcher sells pig's flesh."

He had added: "Come in, for I am shriveled with weariness; I am famished."

He had not mentioned the reason for their taking refuge in a city slum, instead of continuing their flight toward the Moroccan border and the stone huts of kinsmen who herded goats and garnered meagre crops in the mountains. His wife was less reticent.

"The child has also to be considered—the child I shall bear you, O my lord."

"May Allah grant it be a man-child!" He snapped his fingers to ward off misfortune. "A man-child to carry on our race."

"And our feud against the Benni Hossayn, and our hatred of the French roumis—may the Lord God bless neither the one nor the other!"

Of the Benni Fuhara as was her husband, she belonged to a subdivision of the tribe who—as they said in the black felt tents—were so thin-skinned they could hardly bear the weight of their garments, so ready to take offence they could not agree with their own thoughts, so haughty that they considered the strings of their cotton drawers the equal of a Pasha's silken breeches.

A few months earlier Athelba, after a dispute over water and grazing rights, had asked Mansur to mount the young men on their war dromedaries and go out against the French. Mansur—to use his own words—preferred to ride with an idle whip and unused spurs, but under the lash of his wife's ambition, he had gone.

The tribesmen had at first been victorious. They had ambushed a cavalry squadron near an oasis, and had sent the captain's head, sealed in a sack with those of a hyena and a goat, to brigade headquarters. In return the French had swept the desert with columns of white and black troops, with horse, foot and guns. They had caught the Benni Fuhara in their net and slaughtered its men; and they had been aided by the

Benni Hossayn, a tribe of Bedouin cameleers from felt tents near the Fa oasis.

Not that the Benni Hossayn bore the French yoke with patience, but for over five hundred years they had been at enmity with the Benni Fuhara.

They had followed in the wake of the French as a jackal follows a hunting lioness and the light had rippled red from lance and sword as they rolled over the villages of the Benni Fuhara, leaving behind charred ruins and skeletons that lay bleaching in sun and wind.

The surviving Benni Fuhara fled into the wilderness. Some claimed sanctuary, because of bread and salt, because of the hand on a tent-rope, from the veiled Touaregs of the Southern Sahara. Others, crossing the leagues of sand to the Sudan had thrown themselves on the protection of the British.

The French had outlawed the sheik.

The fight over and his tribe wiped out by blood and fire, he had bound his wife behind him on the saddle and fled. The camel, stumbling, had broken a leg. On foot, travelling by day and hiding by night, the pair had gone north, presently reaching Algiers. They were on their way to the mountain fastnesses of the Scorpion.

"For the present," argued Mansur, thinking of the unborn child, "Algiers is safest. Men of a hundred tribes crowd the streets and bazaars. Who can tell one grain of desert sand from another? All look alike to the French."

A railway connected the city with the Moroccan frontier. They might hope to pass unnoticed among the swarms of Moors who every year made the journey from Algeria to help the vintners and olive-growers with their crops. Meanwhile they lingered in the deserted caravanserai.

A knock on the outer door had taken them by sur-

prise. It meant that their stealthy comings and goings had been observed, that someone eager to earn the three thousand francs the French had put on Mansur's head, had betrayed them.

Although so far above the street they could hear the words of command:

"Who goes there?"

"Halt!"

"Quick! Quick!"

Soldiers driving away the curious who had gathered from the neighbouring slums.

The two on the top floor had been squatting on the floor by the bed. The sounds from below chilled their blood. The noise increased. The pounding on the door had changed to a smashing sound, a bursting, to feet on the stair.

"May Allah protect my lord!"

A square iron-grilled window set high in the wall let in the moon rays. Mansur rose, passing into the light and revealed himself as of medium height, stocky and swathed in a camel's-hair burnoose. His bearded face showed a brave uneasiness.

In his youth he had spent some years at a Moslem university famous for Koranic learning and, could he have followed his bent he would have roamed, tambourine in hand, through Islam, improvising verse. His father's death, however, had made him sheik of the Benni Fuhara and marriage with Athelba had stiffened his ambition.

His wife was dear. Each morning, as he phrased it, his love for her "was flung headlong into re-birth." For the events which had caught him as a rat in a trap he did not blame her. Not even now.

"The Lord God has closed his doors against me—blessed be his name! Still"—his voice remained dispassionate—"I would prefer to die fighting."

She bent her head in a murmur of bitter, miserable acquiescence. "It is in keeping with the traditions of the people of the tents."

A rattle of glass as rifle butt smashed windows, a clinking, and the sound of harsh voices reached their ears. Suddenly, in a spasm of despair, the woman covered her face.

"Forgive me, my lord," she sobbed.

His laugh was tender. His fate was written and he could spare time to reassure her. "Allah! The night of miracles! Never before have I heard you ask forgiveness of any!"

"Ah, ah, you jest! It was my fault. It was I who—"

"Who can escape what is written on his forehead by the Angel of the Scrolls?"

"My fault," she repeated. "My pride is my curse." Although she blamed herself the words were her excuse. "Come now, there are too many for you to fight. You must hide."

Again he smiled. "The holes are big enough for—rats."

"There are cupboards," and she pointed to a dirty door. "That behind you is deep. Hide under the rags."

"Useless! No room in it to clear a blade or strike a blow. My beard will be dishonoured. I shall not die fighting—take an enemy with me to Paradise."

"Go, go," she pushed him toward the door. "The soldiers—listen to them—they have our speech, they are of our blood, our faith. A whispered word in their ears—"

"They have eaten the bread and salt of the French. They are in the French service—"

"Leave it to me. It is your only chance."

He had obeyed her during life, why not in the hour of death?

"You will not die, my lord. I know it. Quick!"

Beyond the door a confusion of Arab voices were being punctuated by clipped French words of command. A fist beat on the door. "Open! Hey, there! Open."

As she thrust him through into the dark, she kissed him passionately. "On thee the peace of God," and she shut the door, with the same movement drawing the veil over her face.

"Open! Open!"

A tearing sound as a bayonet was thrust into the jamb. "Open—in the name of the Republic!"

As the door gave, a man held up a lamp. The ruddy light showed crowding bearded faces, uniforms, the black holes of levelled rifles.

"Halt!"

Another order, followed by the thud of rifle butts on the floor.

"Surrender!"

Pushing to the front, an elderly French civilian was the first to enter. He saw, standing before him, a woman in a loose violet robe. Of her face between the top seam of her veil and the kerchief over her blue-black hair, only the forehead tattooed with the tribal design of the Benni Fuhara was visible, and the grey, gold-flecked, almond eyes.

Bowing politely the man introduced himself as M. Sevier, examining magistrate. He held a warrant for the arrest of Mansur-el-Andalusi charged with treason and rebellion.

"My husband is not here. Be pleased to go away."

"Your tongue is false. Half an hour ago he was seen to enter this house."

"He is not here," Athelba repeated. "I swear it by

the adorable Prophet Mohammed—on Him the salute!"

"I know the Arabs. To them an oath to a Christian is written on water. Also, when I was outside the door, I heard voices. So, you see—"

"I was speaking to God," she interrupted.

"So?"

"I was cursing the French. I was imploring Allah to pour out their blood on the edge of the sword and to make their women barren as mules."

A faint suppressed laugh from among the Arab soldiery, increased her courage.

"Be pleased to go away," she continued. "This is the harem." Then superbly—"It is not fitting for a man to enter here with loud words and sounds of strife."

"But look here—"

"I have spoken, sir, I have nothing to add."

As if casually she turned further into the room. A step and she was leaning against the cupboard in which her husband was hidden.

The Frenchman sighed, conscious of admiration for the fearless woman. Nevertheless he turned to the lieutenant and told him to continue the search.

Certain of the troopers followed the magistrate, others, led by the lieutenant, hurried through the curtainless Moorish arches which connected that apartment with the rest of the suite. Torches were switched on. Their light stabbed the dark and from beyond and above came the trampling of heavy boots, the sounds of opening doors.

The lieutenant reappeared on the threshold.

"Go ahead," he said to the three soldiers who had remained with Athelba. "Remember, three thousand francs for the one who gets Mansur—dead or alive."

The men saluted and while two busied themselves

looking under the bed, behind rickety tables and into great, painted, mouldering boxes and cupboards along the farther wall, the third walked up to Athelba.

As he advanced she addressed him in a voice the others could not hear. "Three thousand francs the roumis offer for a Moslem's head. What are three, or thirty, or thirty times three thousand francs between children of the same soil?" And she touched the chevrons on his sleeve, as a Bedawin touches the tent-rope of another Bedawin to claim protection.

"Behold, I have alighted at your tent, O son of Adam!"

For reply the man laughed softly and reaching up pushed the head-dress from his forehead. Athelba saw on it the tribal mark of the Benni Hossayn, saw also that he was known to her.

"Zeid ibn-Reshid!"

"Aye—Zeid ibn-Reshid. It seems I cannot escape you, O crusher of hearts. Nor"—again he laughed—"nor can you escape me!"

Her glance rested on his face but she was looking into the past, was beholding an incident which had happened before her marriage to Mansur. Her father's only child, it was Athelba's task to drive his herd to pasturage on the oasis. One morning when passing between some rocks a man had stepped out to stand in her path.

"Ho, crusher of hearts!" he had cried with a heavy swagger. "By Allah—there are secrets on your lips that mine must read."

He had caught her by the shoulders, had laughed at her struggles.

"A Benni Fuhara, you? A Benni Hossayn, I? Pah! What does a feud matter when soul speaks naked to soul and passion answers?"

Roaring a bridal song of his tribe he had dragged her toward his tent.

Returning from a search for strayed camels three youths of the Benni Fuhara heard the scuffling and singing. They caught Zeid, gave him the drubbing of his life; and while they belaboured him with camel sticks and hippo-hide flails, Athelba danced about the prostrate man, kicking him with her hard little feet and asking what now of the bridal song?

That was seven years ago. Today he was a sergeant in the French army. With a mocking laugh he repeated the whisper: "It seems I cannot escape you, O crusher of hearts. Nor can you escape me—"

She drew away, till her back was against the door that sheltered her husband. Instinctively she stretched her arms against the wood.

Followed by the soldiers the two Frenchmen returned from their fruitless search.

"Our bird must have flown the coop in spite of our precautions," said the magistrate.

"Unless he is in this room," he turned to the soldiers. "Have you looked everywhere?"

"Oui, mon lieutenant!"

The officer glanced at Zeid ibn-Reshid. "That cupboard there?" and pointed to the door behind Athelba. "The woman seems to be interested—"

He stopped, for he had seen the expression of her eyes and felt sorry for her. Then he shrugged his shoulders. He was a cog in the machine. He was in the service of France.

"Have you looked, sergeant?"

"It is the only place I have not looked."

"Go ahead." The lieutenant being moved spoke gruffly. "What the devil are you waiting for?"

The soldiers drew up in line, their rifles levelled at

the door, and Athelba must step aside. As she did so her eyes met those of Zeid ibn-Reshid.

"Forgive me, O son of Adam!" said her eyes. "Have pity, O creature of God! By the life of my unborn son—have pity! Are we not both Moslems, Arabs? Look, look at me! I am still beautiful! I am still young! I can still stir the heart! For the love of Allah, for the love of the Prophet Mohammed, for the love of Esa, son of Mary—have pity!"

"Go on, sergeant," barked the lieutenant, impatiently.

"Be careful," warned a soldier, "the rebel may be inside. These nomads are full of wiles."

"I, too, am full of wiles," boasted Zeid but to Athelba he murmured, "Place thy reliance upon God!"

While she waited, breathless, rigid, he entered the gloom of the closet. In her heart hope and despair struggled for the mastery.

Zeid ibn-Reshid came out. He was alone. He closed the door.

"No living thing is inside," he told the lieutenant, and when Athelba swayed in a joy greater almost than she could bear, he steadied her with a hand on her arm, and whispered, "Did the French offer three thousand francs for your husband's head? What is gold between children of the same soil—between Benni Hossayn and Benni Fuhara?"

The soldiers' hobnailed boots clumped down the rickety stair. The outer door slammed.

"Come, my lord!" she cried eagerly. "The French are gone."

No answer.

"Come!" she said more loudly.

A premonition swept over her. She rushed to the candle, lighted it, and opened the cupboard door.

Zeid ibn-Reshid had spoken the truth. No living

thing was inside but a dead man, his throat slashed by a bayonet blade.

A cry broke from her as she crumpled to the floor.

But she was a Bedawin, a Moslem. Fate was a blind camel which came out of the dark without warning, without jingling of bells.

"What is written is written!"

She prayed to Allah, "Who bringeth forth the living from the dead! Blessed be Allah, the Lord of Daybreak!"

At length she rose and crossing to the window looked south, looked toward the desert.

The race was not yet run, the doom of the Benni Fuhara not yet sealed. There was a life to come, the life of her unborn child.

"Allah, All-Merciful, let it be a man-child. Let him grow up strong and lusty, ruthless and wide-stepping. Let him find a wife among the Scorpion who will bear many children! Let his breed increase a thousandfold, O Lord God!"

No hurry—for what was time among the eternities of the Sahara—but the day of revenge would surely come, revenge on the French, a redder revenge on the Benni Hossayn.

She picked up Mansur-el-Andalusi's sword and it gleamed in the light of the candle. Allah willing, her child would wield it on a day.

Somewhere in this Moslem city would be a decent Moslem who would bury her husband and give her an asylum until the child was born.

Dry-eyed, the woman of the Benni Fuhara stepped into the street. The morn was lightening the east.

She stopped a grey-bearded, respectable Arab.

"Ana bi wejhaq, yah Sidi," she said. "I crave thy protection, sir."

THE VENGEANCE

By Cecil Mann

WHEN, through the inch-wide cracks between the slabs of the dairy, old Klaus saw Alpin hook up his bay at the sliprails and stride across the cropped paspalum toward the bails, he knew something very serious was amiss. He could see, even though a clear two-hundred yards separated them, that the young returned soldier's face was set in grim lines, and also that it was haggard.

Putting two and two together in his own methodical way, he guessed the reason of the visit. It was nearly twelve months since Alpin and his fluffy-haired city wife went out to their war-selection, two miles around on the other side of Grey Knob. That either of them—for Alpin was an obvious war wreck when they came—had managed to stick it out added weight to the grudge he already had against them on the score of Alpin having been a soldier. He had let them know his feelings early, and since then had seen nothing of them except that Alpin rode past from time to time.

He came out to the door of the dairy as Alpin pushed open the small whitewashed gate. Sight of the soldier's tunic, frayed and blackened from use among the fire-scorched timber on the clearing, helped to fan up his smouldering hate, which was not diminished by the fact that Alpin, despite his present haggardness, looked stronger and healthier than the gas-marked man who had gone out to that selection twelve months earlier.

His small eyes glowing with a dulled lambency, the old German settler pointed to the gate. "Ged oud," he said. "Ged oud bevor I ged mine gun an' schood you!"

"For God's sake, listen." Alpin held up his right

hand with the fist closed. "It's the wife. She'll die if we don't get her away."

"Vife! Vife! Do plazes mit you vife! Ged out uv mine blace. I am nod you vife's modder!"

"I tell you she'll die. It's a baby. She's going to have a baby!"

"You don' say!" Klaus was chuckling inwardly, but the desperate man in front of him saw only the grim hate glowing in the greenish-grey eyes and the square chin and rugged mouth set like a rock. It was a supreme moment for Klaus, one he'd have given half his scrubber herd to own. He did not waste it. "You midghd dake her in do Binbobbin on der vrund uv der saddle. Ach! Id's only dwendy-nine mile!"

The goad stung. "You swine!" Alpin shouted. "You know I can't get her into Binbobbin. A woman can die out there on her own and you won't lend a hand! I wanted you to let your wife or your girl go out while I rode on to Lowrie's to ring for the doctor."

"Vell, id's only anoder vordeen mile do Lowrie. Ged oud uv mine blace an' ride id!"

The lanky ex-soldier clutched his hands, trying to hold back his rage, and made a final plea. "You know I wouldn't see you stuck like this," he said. "It's terrible serious or I wouldn't be standing here asking you. She got bad all of a sudden. She's white as a ghost and can't move. Are you going to help?"

But he was up against something that knew no chivalry, the dull hatred of a dull mind, nursed and nourished for years, against all who fought in the war that took his only son, who happened to be in the Fatherland when it broke out. And he was against something even deeper than that. The memory of it came to Klaus now. There had been no consideration for his feelings or for what was at stake when the police came with the order that he had to go into the

concentration-camp. They had not spared him even though Wilhelmina, the little golden-haired six-year-old that came to him late in his life, was on her death-bed. They were so officious in the grip of their feverish spy-mania that he knew they wouldn't have gone without him even if they had heard her crying from pain in the night.

His hatred blazed out now with a suddenness that took Alpin by surprise. "You! You!" he shouted. "Ach! der whole tam lod uv you!" He stepped suddenly back into the dairy and took the shotgun off the nail behind the door. "Ged oud!" he reiterated. "Ged oud uv mine blace before I schood you!"

Thought of the sick woman on the bed of their slab hut saved Alpin's rage from mastering him and perhaps, saved his life. With strong hands clenching and opening, he turned, went through the gate and on toward the sliprails.

The frail little woman, brown and skinny from years of ceaseless slavery among the cows, came out from her hiding-place in the bails.

"Vod are you doing mit der gun, Harz?" she asked.

Klaus, watching Alpin mount his horse and swing along the unmade road toward Lowrie's, did not answer, and Mrs. Klaus went on into the dairy and emptied her bucket of milk into the separator vat. When she came out again, as Anna, big-boned and fresh-cheeked, came up from turning the cows into the night paddock, Klaus, gun under his arm, was making across the clearing toward the heavy timber that came down their side of Grey Mount and just now bore the golden mantle of the setting sun high on its leafy roof.

Klaus walked on. His wife and Anna could do the separating. He had had a little honey mixed with the gall of his heart and he wanted to get away and gloat

on it. Entering the fringe of the forest, he kept his face turned upward, scanning among the gums for a sign of animal or bird life. Fifty yards in he discerned in the semi-gloom the round, fluffy bundle of a native bear on one of the lower limbs of a great stringybark. He halted, lifted the gun and fired. For a few seconds the echoes reverberated through the trees and the blue smoke hung between him and his prey. When the smoke cleared, he saw the bear still on the limb, wounded, making clumsy efforts to get higher. Presently it slipped, but it clung desperately to the limb, and held itself in a fork against the main trunk. There it began to claw at its wounds and, that failing to ease them, it began to cry.

In all his twenty years in the Bush, it was the first wounded bear Klaus had ever heard. He almost doubted that it was the bear, so painfully, poignantly human was the cry that came down to him. It was the cry of a child, of a sick child suffering excruciating pain; a cry that no combination of letters in any language could convey to the ear. It kept repeating, a new cry rising out of the stricken thing before the previous one had died away, so that it became one long, piteous pleading. Suddenly Klaus knew—it was pleading to be dead. He lifted the gun and pulled the trigger, heard the dead, faint click of the hammer. The other barrel had been empty!

Lowering the gun, he stood looking at the clawing, crying bundle in the fork. For the first time since the bitterness warped his soul he wanted to do a human act. He took up a stone and threw it, but it landed dully against the tree-trunk yards below the brown creature whose cry was now rising on a shriller, more pitifully penetrating note. As the cry rose, keening through the trees, it became intimate, familiar, touching remembrance.

He was sitting on an old kerosene-box, holding the twitching hand of little Wilhelmina, with the candle throwing its spluttering light across the bed. Her tiny gold head moved from side to side on the pillow. She was crying, crying from pain, like this dying creature in its tree. The police who came to take him away to the concentration-camp next morning had not heard that crying. If they had, perhaps they might not have taken him. He had never admitted the thought before, but now, with the pitiful crying in the tree growing fainter, it became probable, feasible, even natural. And when he had had word from a visitor to the camp that she was dead he had not sought permission to go to her. Instead he had nursed the news away as fuel for his hate.

He heard a swishing in the air, caught a glimpse of the falling thing, heard the muffled thud where it fell, a few yards from his feet. The bear lay still. It had ceased to cry. He knew it was dead, and did not question why he should feel grateful for that. He left it there, and went back with the empty gun.

Crossing the log over the creek at the pigsties he thought of the man he had threatened to shoot not an hour before. Then he thought of Alpin's wife. Her hair was fluffy, a golden fluffiness, and Wilhelmina's had been like that. It used to fluff up in the wind as she ran about the paddock after the poddies.

He bore off to the left, toward the paddock beyond the sorghum patch. He let down the sliprails, drafted the old grey mare away from her nearly grown foal and the piebald, and drove her up to the yard adjoining the bails. Then, from the lean-to at the back of the dairy, he brought out the spring-cart harness.

Mrs. Klaus, putting her shrivelled old face out the back door, saw him backing the harnessed mare into the shafts, and, though she guessed accurately the desti-

nation, she did not wholly understand. She decided to find out, and, taking a bucket on pretence of returning it to the dairy, passed yards closer to him than was strictly necessary.

"I vant you der com mit me," Klaus said, without looking up from the trace he was fastening to its hook.

"Ah, Harz," she said, "I vill pe back in a momend."

She went back to the house hurriedly, taking the bucket with her. When she came out again she threw a bundle into the back of the cart and clambered up over the front step.

Outside the sliprails Klaus headed the old mare toward Alpin's, and beat her up into a lolloping trot with his long willow switch. They bounced side by side in absolute silence over the two miles of rugged bush road till the light, coming thinly through the open door of the hut, fell on the near wheel of the cart. Then Klaus got down and began a minute investigation of each of the old mare's hoofs.

"She bicked ub a sdone in von vood," he grumbled.

"Ah, Harz," the woman said, lugging the bundle with her out of the cart, "vill I go in?"

"She bicked ub a sdone," Klaus persisted, and, accepting that as an affirmation, she went in through the narrow doorway, around the end of the half-finished partition, and into the room where the fluffy, golden hair adorned the pillow about the ghastly-white face. There she put down the bundle and spoke. But her voice had changed. It might have been another woman's. It had become soft, crooning; her harsh consonants, still apparent, were yet melting. She bent over the sick woman.

"Prave liddle von, id is soon offer. I vill help you. I am a nurse. I vos drain in Chermany."

A moan escaped the thin lips of the sick woman,

but she gripped the other's hand and whispered relief and gratitude.

"Oh—the pain!" she whispered. "Than—thanks, Mrs. Klaus. Dick said you might—come when I was so—so bad."

The old nurse stroked her forehead, pressing down the temples, comforting her. "I haf doo hod pags here," she said. "I vill fill dese ven der vatter is hod. I can hear Harz light der vire"——

When, nearly two hours later, Klaus heard the clip-clop of a horse's hoofs on the bush road he went out from looking at the little bundle of new-born humanity to which his wife was trying to attract the mother's slightly dazed, bewildered thoughts. As the jaded horse with Alpin in the saddle drew closer he began taking up each of the old mare's hoofs in turn, and was scratching with a stick at a perfectly clean frog of the off-hind hoof when Alpin peered down to make sure who it was.

"You're—you're here!" Alpin gasped. "Is everything all right? How's my wife?"

Without looking up, Klaus went on scratching at the hoof. "She bicked ub a sdone in von vood," he grumbled.

THE COW

By Katharine Susannah Prichard

THE cow was browsing on a patch of grass below the orchard. She swaggered across it, her tawny sides full-blown, udder swaying, distended and moon-white, over the grass; legs propped, stick-like and stiff.

There were yellow leaves on the fruit-trees, though the grass was young and fiery.

Rain had come out of a grey sky, needling and flashing. A few days ago it had beaten against the hills and withdrawn, as if they were too hard and dry to make any impression on. But here it was again, the rain, taut and glistening, hair-fine and evanescent, streaming. Rain, lashings of rain, flung down from the sky, wrapping the hills, threshing the earth.

From the verandah of one of those small wooden houses squatted against the hillside, Lucia watched the cow feeding. Coming up from the paddocks where he had been grubbing out stumps and burning-off, her husband stood to watch the cow, too. He did not see Lucia. He was happy in the rain, the misty veil of it everywhere; that film of green spreading on the hard red ground. Lucia guessed he would be hoping for Sloe-Eyes' calf to be a heifer and that Menindji would go ten bags.

Heavy and dark, she hung against the verandah railing. Her husband, looking up, saw her. His mouth gaped as he laughed to her. Lucia glowered at him. She was furious, while she adored his bulk, the sway of his limbs as he strode towards her, that slow-moving grace and slumbering vigour. She could have killed him for the satisfaction with which he embraced her; the pride soggy and replete.

"Raining gold to the cockies," he said.

"When will she be in, George?"

"Any day now, I should think."

Sight of the cow there on the grass, in the rain, fed Lucia's resentment. The cow was the same colour as the sun-dried straw of wild oats she was nosing about under for young grass. George was proud of her. He brought her into the orchard for tit-bits as soon as the grass was up. And she knew his step in the dark. If he was walking along the road at night, she lowed from somewhere far off in the paddocks.

And every year, for the three years since Lucia and George Brown were married, Sloe-Eyes had swaggered round like that with a calf. It was an insult to her, Lucia told herself. She was jealous of the cow.

Surprised and wondering, she chewed the cud of her discontent. What was the matter? It could have nothing to do with George. There was the child he had told her of, by another woman, before they were married.

Lucia watched the rain, flashing, glinting, miraculous, striking the earth, beating against it, penetrating to seeds in the dust. Thrilling, whirring, they were, to the rain, springs of energy released; infinitesimal secret, subtle cells, stirring; flying to the dance of fertilisation. Mists of rain stood up from among the wattles, bouquets of trees with small round leaves like three-penny bits, blue-grey and bloomy, white in the high light. Fume and ferment were in the air, as if seed pods, sienna husks and grains of ebony, lying thick beneath the trees, were making that mist by the heat of their gestation.

Stirred and thirsty, Lucia listened to the rain, its drip and lisp. Held up her face; opened her mouth.

"Is a man going to get anything to eat in this house to-night?"

George was calling.

Lucia went to give him his meal. They ate and drank together. George talked, reckoning the chances of an early winter; too happy because of the rain to notice her sullen quiet.

He talked of Menindji. The wheat was in. Menindji had got 160 points and "if the season kept going as she had started, there'd be seven bags on the fallow. On the new land—seen it go ten bags in a good season," he said. "But if we're not greedy we can reckon on five, at least, and five bags at 5/– a

bushel—though there's no reason she shouldn't go 6/8 like she did this year . . . a pound a bag makes it easy reckoning. . . ."

He went to sleep, talking of Menindji and Sloe-Eyes' calf.

"And if Sloe-Eyes has a heifer calf . . ."

It had been raining all the evening. Lucia had heard it through the drone of her husband's talk. That drip and lisp of the rain.

Dripping, lisping of the rain, warm, slow, silvery gliding down the long bodies of the trees, washing the broad slopes of the hills. She had been listening to it for hours. It stirred and excited her, like listening to the whisper of a lover, incisive, insistent.

When George had gone to bed, she went out to the verandah. She would not go to bed; she could not sleep. She knew what she wanted. Unconsciously, she had been moving towards it all the evening. Always she had loved to run out into the first warm rain at the end of the summer. It made you grow, the rain, someone had said to her once. "You need the rain to make you grow as much as the trees and all other living things."

It had been good, her life with George. She had fed well, slept well, been as well cared for as any of his animals; but he had not given her what every other creature on the farm had, creativeness. Suppressed, blocked, dammed. That's what she had been. It was unbearable.

In the darkness, beside a tree near the verandah, Lucia undid her dress, took off her clothes, not quite sure of herself, a little self-conscious. She stood clinging to the tree; the rain struck her, fine and straight, with needle points. Realisation that it was a queer, mad thing she was doing, refused to be obliterated. She smiled at herself and at the tree she was clasping

as if it were a man, laughed at herself, the tree and the rain. Then free, flung up her arms and stood out from the tree, giving herself to the rain.

She ran from one tree to another in the quiet garden, among the wattles, over their husks and seeds. The rain was falling through thin moonlight. Trees, hills —all that she could see of them—in light, frail and shining as the rain, sun-dried grass, and trees, broad-backed and heavy limbed.

Lucia was prostituted to it all. As she stood, she felt the rain filtering through her as it was filtering through the earth. Each shaft stabbed her to the earth. It might have been one of those long, entomological pins they use to hold down butterflies. Lucia felt like a butterfly pinned to the earth.

The shiver of a nerve startled her. Struck through her rapture and lost consciousness.

How could she have been the dour and heavy woman of a few hours ago? She was young and joyous.

As she scrambled up the rough path her bare feet felt the stones. She was conscious of her nakedness. Help! It was absurd; but she was riotously happy. Ridiculous, of course, to go prowling round like this in the rain. But Lord . . . how lovely! Like dipping in the lagoon of some tropical island before dawn, wandering under the clear, still water. In another world, a world of grey and blue trees weeping mysteriously, silverly, swept by this warm, sweet rain.

She was in the house, in its warm dusk, humanly smelling. George was sleeping still. She could hear his slow, regular breathing. Stumbled through the rooms to where he lay, heavy and potent as a green log in the forest. Cold and fresh, all wet and earthy smelling from the rain and leaves, she leaned over him. Her wet arms went across him; her face covered his.

"Cripes," he muttered sleepily. And: "Hell!" as his hands found her.

"I couldn't bear it," Lucia told him, "for the rain not to rain on me too."

Promise of the child was like the germinating of a seed. Every day Lucia went off to the hills with it, threw herself down on the earth and gave herself up to a song of rejoicing, sense of fusion with all the forces of being. "I, too!" she cried to the trees, the hills, birds, bees and wild flowers. She felt herself in the stream that bore them along: as immense as the stars and the loam with new worlds.

Her child was born during the summer. Ruddy and well made he was.

Lucia had him in her arms when the next rain came. She was on the verandah nursing him as George brought Sloe-Eyes on to the patch of grass below the orchard.

"Beaten her this time," she called.

He laughed back at her and the child.

Lucia's second child was born soon after Sloe-Eyes' next calf. She was proud to have another son; but she had not expected him so soon. And he was there before she was ready for him.

Sloe-Eyes was feeding both Lucia's children when her third baby was born. The baby was a girl. Lucia was dismayed to know of her coming. She had no gladness, no vitality for the child. Her creativeness seemed to have been exhausted; but it was not. It worked mechanically. She had neither health nor strength to give the next child. She surrendered all she had; conscientiously but with a mind so troubled, so distraught, there was no room in it for pleasure in the little one's soft dark head, eyes of a small blind animal.

Lucia went on with the work of her days. Waking

in the morning, to weariness and exhaustion, dumb, strung by an effort of will, she cooked, scoured dishes, fed, washed and dressed her children, swept and tidied the house, sewed, and fell into bed again. That, day after day, becoming wearier, more slatternly, more ill-tempered, harassed, devastated.

Sloe-Eyes' calf was taken away by the butcher. The cow blared all the morning; but she had forgotten about the calf next day.

"Why did you do that?" Lucia asked her husband.

"What?"

"Sell Sloe-Eyes' calf?"

"Got ten bob for him," he said. "We're not getting sentimental about bull calves, are we?"

When rain came again at the end of the summer, Lucia went to the hills with her consternation. She raged: she was demented. She walked miles through the bush, along the winding tracks, across the bosom of the hills, round them, over the shoulder blades and back of the ridge. Without joy, she walked, furious that it should be so: that she should be walking without joy in the hills, under the trees; that she should be using them like this.

The earth was heavy with rain, black and purpling where a fire had passed; scorched saplings, henna, sienna; leaves and bark, dank, red, rusting into the ground; seedlings, thrust among them, small, green, two-eared.

"To be dead . . . lie down . . . be still . . . lose for a while this consciousness of life . . . not to see . . . not to hear . . . not to think . . . not to feel, any more."

Sick and furious, she wandered. In the world of the trees where everything grew, she was alien, hostile. The trees held themselves away from her. Their great branches swung against the sky as if withdrawing from

contact. "Who is this woman?" they said to each other, though Lucia knew that they knew her quite well.

They had seen her wandering along the creek, with the children, gathering wild flowers, looking for mushrooms, or picking up dry branches to light her kitchen fire in the morning. She had come to them by herself, to bathe in the quiet, enter into their life with them, and always they had given her balm and joy. Never before had it been like this; never before had they refused to receive her.

Lucia sat down on a fallen tree-trunk. Dead and wet, against the earth, bark broken by ants nesting in it, millions of them, millions and millions; fungus, the colour of persimmons outgrowing, and toadstools, raising frail stalks and ghastly yellow wimples.

"I'm this. This is me—this trunk of a dead and rotting tree." Lucia mused, fixed and still, in her despair. "Life's fastened on me like this. It's a parasite —a cancerous growth. I loathe it . . . yet can't loathe it . . . altogether."

Rising and weeping over herself, she repudiated all she had thought and done. It was hateful, outrageous. Oh, to be strong, to be free as a cow, or a tree, to bear, feed, give life, in vigour and tranquillity.

Blue dark, and purple as grapes withering on the vines a few months ago, the sky behind the heave of the ranges. Birds flew before the shadow, magpies, white and black of their wings and backs cut hard as aboriginal drawings against the trees; black cockatoos swinging in wide circles about a dead tree, wild cries clanging.

Stolid, the trees about her. Two red-gums, dark-blooded trees, many armed like Brahmin gods, their branches elbowed this way and that, clutched at the sky with crooked, tangled fingers, leaves folded in

heavy drapery about them. But they would have nothing to do with her, looked down and held themselves aloof.

Desolate, Lucia walked among them. Beseeching, but they would not hear her. Waved their great arms and turned aside. Never had such a sense of fury and misery possessed her; never had she been so lost in a nightmare of warring instincts and reason.

"I'm right. I know I'm right," she told the trees.

An orchid, among the leaves, cocked his white horns at her, squinting from out a green hood spotted with red.

"My precious." Lucia stretched out her hand and broke off his stem. "You're the first I've seen this year. You're miraculous . . . beautiful as some mythical creature. I love you. You grow among the dead leaves. The dead leaves feed you. But I will not be a dead trunk. I will not give life unless I will. I will not have life forced through me against my will. I am not a dead trunk. I will not bear industrious insects, fungus, red, yellow, or persimmon, and ghostly toadstools. I will not."

A group of white-gums against the rain-dark slope of the hillside beckoned. As if caught dancing, they stood, poised and posed in the gesture and fluid grace of rhythmic abandon. White jade, their limbs to eyes half-closed; grey and white, sheening, their foliage formless, rain-misted.

Two young trees, growing close together, lithe, slight and graceful as girls, inclined towards each other. Another erect, leaned towards the west, naked and lovely her flesh of greenish ivory. Further, a virgin, passionate and immature, threw thin arms to a great height; half-hipped, round-limbed, forked low, with branches breaking evenly, the tree beside. Others, tall young trees, their rags of bark wrapped round them,

red and brown, trooped downhill, flying, backs and thighs, wild arms and sloping bodies, dim, immaculate as under a rime of frost.

"The law? Oh, yes, my dears, I know the law," Lucia talked to the trees. "You're all children of this dead tree, I daresay. She has given her beauty and grace an hundredfold. But has she? She's thrown too many seeds on the soil here for any of you to be the tree she was, really. You there are crooked, bent at the middle. It's all very well to have the grey arms of a heron flopping across the river on a wintry day, but where are you going? What are you going to do?

Billy Winkin's no good,
Chop him up for firewood . . .

That's what one of my children was singing this morning . . ."

Magpies, among the trees, squawked, and went on with their distant talking. Oboes their throats, gurgling over melodies, flung high in the air, above the tree-tops.

"Besides, it's a long time since I was a tree. I worship with the Egyptians . . . adore life, the life-giver, fecundity, creation. Not a helpless, futile spawning—but lust and joy in life. The dark tides which sweep you to your doom, assail me, creep through my blood . . ."

On the road, out from the hills and trees, Lucia felt herself suddenly free; filled with light, a derisive gaiety. Against the shadow the hills and heavy timber had cast over her, her brain was glowing, diffusing incandescence.

Lucia hurled her defiance.

"Old hills and trees, you with your superstitions . . . excommunications . . . dark forces . . . black magic!

You can't intimidate me. You can't make an outcast of me. Though I drown in this misery . . . my brain swings clear as the stars of Orion over the humped black back of The Swan."

Darker, blue-purple, the sky behind the ranges, shadowed the plains, scrub, cleared lands, and townships scattered over them, white roofs, red roofs, grey, white and muddy walls; one cloud, downy and white as the feather from a bird's wing, drifted across.

George swung along the path from the paddocks driving the cow before him.

Wild oats, their empty sheaths shaken by the wind, were still standing on the slope below the orchard.

The cow turned to young green growing under the fruit trees; her tawny hide, sleek and gleaming, the crescent of her horns, black-tipped, against the hillside, dim in the rain beginning to fall again.

"She can have it on her own, George," Lucia called. "I'm scratched—"

Indifferent, feeding placidly, the cow moved with heavy sides and swollen udder over the grass.

THE STONE BRIDGE OF THE ROSSITSA

By Angel Karaliytscheff

"HOW am I to know, Mother, if I have sinned?"

"Tell me about it, Son."

"What shall I tell you?"

"You have lain sick for three years. Three summers have passed like an unending caravan. They passed in front of your little window and looked through it. The black cherries have ripened three times, but you did not raise your hand to pick them. On the threshing-floor the sheaves have three times

been piled high into ricks. Was God's world no longer dear to you? Were you not anxious to be out in the sunshine, to look at the trees, the wheat fields, the magnificent bridge, to see how the young girls had bloomed? Three summers—yet you have not risen from your bed!"

"Mother, I do not miss the world. I do not long for it now."

"You are a man, you must have a man's longings. How can you tell me differently?"

The candle illumined the face of the sick man. Saint Mary in the icon clasped the little Jesus as if she held him for the first time. Sitting on a small bench the old woman laid her hand gently on the hand of her son. She wanted to help yet did not know how to question him. A tear ran down her face. Outside in the white night it was freezing. In the road, above the black hedges, the trees whispered their prayers. Softly they besought heaven. The chimneys pierced the thick branches in order to discover whether the whole world was asleep.

The grey kitten stared with round expressionless eyes.

"Do you remember, Mother?"

"What?"

"The summer they began to build the bridge over the Rossitsa. Milka had sewed for me a white shirt with red embroidery."

"I remember as if it were today. In that summer you finished your twenty-second year and became a young man of marriageable age."

"All laughed at me saying I could not join the Cherkovo plain to the village, that I could not oppose and overcome the river, putting a stone girdle on it, subduing it to my will as though it had been a bride. I knew I could. My father and I had wandered for

seven years building homes for people. I had learned to build, I had grown skilful and my father was pleased with me. One day we went to the river to cut down an old poplar—you may remember it?—and we sat on the bank. The Rossitsa flowed past, singing. The willows bowed their heads to the cool water. Father said to me, 'Listen, Manol, I could not do it so you must. Here is the place. The bridge should rest on the two banks and thus connect two worlds. On the other side grows the people's bread. Give them a bridge that they may harvest it.'

"A bird was singing in the poplar. I listened to it and to Father, and said, 'Am I the man to give it to them?'

" 'You are that man and remember this is the place. A stone bridge with four arches. Have cutters from Thrace to cut the stones. Gather the peasants to help and, as long as the world lasts, the people will remember you gratefully.'

"The bird that sang had silver wings from which dropped the dews of heaven. Even if my father had not told me to I should have built the bridge. I pictured it exactly as later I built it. I saw it as a hoop imprisoning a yellow viper—the river that twisted and extended its body, darting, untamed and free, to the blue hills. I could hear wagons rumbling across, while the hay riggings rattled and the buffaloes from Deli-Orman tossed their horned heads.

" 'When you begin to build it,' I heard my father say, 'wall up in it your dearest.'

" 'Who is my dearest?'

" 'That you alone know.' "

The sick boy fell silent. Christ's Mother nodded her head and her lips formed the words, "Never will I give up my son."

Through the window the moon shone yellow.

Shadows of cherry trees chased one another, laughing, along the white street. The night was a silver coverlet. Saint Elias roamed over the dark plain, asking the fields if they were thirsty, promising he would water them the following day.

The boy raised himself a little. "My father died, leaving me to build the bridge. I knew how to build—but not how to kill for the sacrifice, and who could tell me?

"Spring sent the storks to announce her coming. The shaggy stone-cutters arrived. They hammered and hewed and I went on with the work. I was afraid and yet glad.

"It is not easy, Mother, to take life. How dared I? Whom should it be?

"We surveyed the two banks. I began to walk dizzily, afraid lest I should go mad. . . . One evening I went to my father's grave and threw myself on it.

" 'Tell me whom. You know!'

"The grave was silent. Can speech come from a grave?

"I went home and at dawn I fell asleep and dreamed. My father came toward me as if alive. He wore his red belt, his woollen shoulder cloak and, in his hands, held a white eagle. He stopped on the bank of the Rossitsa and said to me:

" 'Watch where the eagle alights, for it will show you whom you must bury. Have courage, my son.'

"The eagle spread its wings and flew toward the sky. It made three circles above the village and dropped. It fell like a falling stone and I did not see where it alighted. My father looked at me, shook his head and started down the bank. Instantly my bridge appeared before him and he was able to cross the river. He stopped on the further bank, looked over

the bridge from end to end, waved his hand and cried 'Farewell!'

"I awoke to find you standing at my bedside, Mother. You said, 'Get up, Manol, already it is dawn. For a long time the wagons have been passing the house and the stone-cutters have begun to hammer. Wake up!'

"Instead of going toward the bridge I took the road to Grandfather Noa's yards. I hoped to see Milka, to tell her all and be comforted. When I reached their house I had a terrible shock, for perched on the walnut-tree was a white eagle. It was the bird my father had freed.

"Everything became dark and my ears were deafened with the rush of blood. I ran to my father's grave. I must ask him how he could deprive me of her, he, my father? Even as I went, though, I knew that the dead cannot be questioned.

"On the bridge the masons sang at their work and the Rossitsa carried away the sound. They had no anxieties, they were able to sing as they built. With large, cracked, trowel-like hands they laid the stones. They would wall up even their beautiful mason's song. Blessed were they!

"Whom should I bury under the pier of the bridge?

"I sat on my father's grave and looked toward Milka's walnut-tree. A white cloud moved in the sky, an angel's soul that was bathed in the flame of the morning. In the evening when I met Milka I should be unable to utter a word.

"I bent over the grave, troubled—tearful—

"Down the Cherkovo road I saw a cloud of yellow dust, heard bells and loud cries. Wagons loaded with sheaves strung themselves out. The bird that had sung on the poplar-tree was now perched on the first wagon and was pecking at the grain. When the men reached the river, they did not unyoke but waited. For what

were they waiting? I got up, rubbing my eyes. No one was in sight. Down below, the masons were crying, 'Hey-ha!'

"I made my decision. This had to be.

"In the evening my Milka came to the well to draw water. When she leaned over I saw her yellow earrings and measured her long black shadow. Only the moon saw me do it."

In the branches a bird began to flutter and warble. The kitten with one bound was at the window, but the sick man ceased, for he was listening. This was the bird which had sung in the poplar-tree. Several nights it had come to sing, now it came again. It huddled among the protecting leaves of the cherry tree. The kitten waited, its paws against the window. Manol's mother, sitting by the bed, could not believe her son had spoken the truth.

"Cursed be the bridge!" she cried. "Would that the storm might carry it away."

"Why curse it, Mother? I made the decision. I built the bridge. I gave her."

"You committed a great sin, my Son!"

The eyes of the master-builder brightened. "Do you remember the day it was finished? What a wild and joyous festival! People from nine villages assembled for the opening of the bridge over the Rossitsa. Many a young man will remember it all his life. Two shepherds from the mountains played bagpipes. Can you recall them? The dark one came often to the house. He proposed to sister Kuna, but you did not give your consent because you thought it wrong to let her marry a stranger. The old people went to the bridge, tapped it with their sticks, touched the square stones and said, 'God has given skill to Manol!' How he had given it to me I alone knew.

"All rejoiced. They drank healths from brightly

coloured wine-flasks, but I was silent and could not drink. When the bagpipes began to skirl, everyone, young and old, sprang to his feet. Seizing each other's hands they began to dance. Someone shouted, 'Where is the master-builder? Why does he not join us in the dance?'

"Suddenly the music ceased, the people fell quiet. They made way and I turned. Mother—O God—I saw a dead body! You know whom they carried.

"I followed to the cemetery to throw a handful of soil upon the grave. Might God give her soul peace!

"When I returned the dancing had been resumed. I snatched up a wine-flask, drank and drank till I was drunk. We danced till midnight. On the plain cauldrons boiled. Nine sheep had been killed for the feast. Down below, the Cherkovo plain appeared to have grown in width. Swallows played above the cornfields. The soil longed for the men who would come shouting to drive in old Adam's plough.

"Bonfires were built. The eyes of the girls gleamed like black fires but my heart was breaking. I thought, 'I will give her up, forget her. Here are others.' I was drunk—God forgive me!

"After midnight, at the crowing of cocks, all went staggeringly home. Instead of accompanying them, I sat on a stone, the thoughts dancing in my head. As I sat there I heard a voice.

" 'Man-o-ol—'

"I walked toward the voice. The moon was flooding the fields with yellow light. I went on till I came to the little hill in the midst of the wheat. I saw before me a naked woman. Her black hair reached the ground.

"She had come up from the left, from the broken wheat—and who knows whence she came. The wide field stretched through the song of the crickets, under

the gleam of the stars. Perhaps I may have been still drunk, I cannot tell.

"I did not take my eyes from the woman who called to me, who awaited me.

" 'Man-o-ol—'

"In the village dogs stretched their heads to the moon and howled, not knowing why. I stood before her, trembling. The wheat fields also trembled, fading from sight. Who was the woman? Where had I seen her? What dark eyes! O Mother, they were familiar.

"Those eyes embraced me. She moved toward me, white and beautiful. I had never before seen a naked woman. Her dark hair shook in the breeze, her eyes burned me. Suddenly the fields became dark and she stretched toward me her bare arms.

" 'For long and long I have been waiting for you.'

"As she uttered these words I knew her. It was Milka. Fear fell upon me and I fled through the fields.

" 'Why do you fear me, Manol? We were betrothed today. Did you not see that the people from all the villages round came to congratulate us?'

"I felt her soft hair. It wrapped me round, suffocating me. . . ."

The candle before the icon flickered and went out. The moon had hidden herself behind the cherry tree. The kitten chased shadows in the street. Farther off in the wheat fields Saint Elias walked, picking herbs in the moonlight. He asked if he should beg the Lord for water. The wheat stalks answered him.

The old woman laid her hand on the forehead of the sick man and wept.

"Please, Mother, on Saturday when you go to the cemetery, stop at her grave—late, when everyone will have gone. Tell her that for three years the Rossitsa

has washed the big stones of my bridge. Has it washed away my sin? Ask her, Mother—she will tell you if my sin is yet forgiven."

THE INFANT COURTIER

I

IN the days of the Emperor Shen Tsung (1068-1086) of the Sung Dynasty lived a Minister of State named Wang and so famous was he that after his death he was canonized as Hsiang Min Kung. During his life he was known by the personal name of Chao and he lived with his family in the capital. The establishment that he maintained was unsurpassed for wealth, luxury and magnificence.

The Feast of Lanterns takes place on the fifteenth day of the first moon and in celebration of the festival every household explodes fire-crackers and lights lanterns. The festival begins on the thirteenth, but the fifteenth is the night of nights, for in accordance with ancient custom the Emperor leaves the seclusion of his palace in order to see the illuminations. Consequently, crowds of people assemble to catch a glimpse of the Heavenly Countenance.

Every year on this night—since cloudy weather only too often obscured the moon—it was the custom to light lanterns of fantastic shapes, which is why people talked of the festival as "The Moon among the Lamps."

That night the wife of Hsiang Min Kung with the girls and women of his household, each dressed in her best, came out to see the sights. They were attended by servants who held round them a cloth barrier. The

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women of high officials, fearing lest, to the outrage of propriety, they should be jostled by the crowds, made use, when they walked abroad, of such a protection. The silk or cotton barrier encircled them, forming a screen from importunities.

Hsiang Min Kung had a certain son, whose place was thirteenth in the family, for he was the youngest. His milk-name was Nan Kai and he was five years old. Intelligent and of unusual beauty, it need hardly be said that he was guarded with solicitude by the women of Hsiang Min Kung's household.

He also was to see the illuminations and look on the Heavenly Face. Like the others he was dressed in his best, and he wore on his little head a beautiful and unusual cap, embroidered with ocean pearls as large as beans, arranged in the form of twin phœnixes and of peonies. In the centre of the pattern was a single cat's-eye and round it were precious stones—jade and turquoise—of many different colours. No one knew how much money the cap might be worth.

Hsiang Min Kung had directed one of the servants, a man named Wang Chi, to accompany the women and carry the child on his back. Wang Chi, being one who knew the proprieties, said to himself, "I am a man. I can scarcely go inside the curtain with the ladies. I must walk outside."

When he reached that gate of the Imperial City which is known as the Gate of Virtue Manifest, the Emperor Shen Tsung was about to ascend the gate tower. It was his sacred wish that the eyes of the multitude should there rest on him. He came forward therefore on the tower and stood in the light of the larger lanterns, the Leviathan Lamps.

Incense sweetened the air, pipes and drums played imperial music and below passed the processions arranged for his pleasure. Beyond the latter stood the

unnumbered multitude, a sea of human beings so closely packed that no space was left between body and body.

Wang Chi was tightly wedged in by the crowd, and, having the child on his back, he must, if he would see what was passing, stand on tiptoe and crane his neck forward. The poor fellow turned his face upward in order to see the Emperor and, gradually, the crowd became more dense, his back and shoulders began to ache, he had cramps in his limbs and the sweat poured from his fatigued body. Suddenly his discomfort was lessened and without thinking out the reason for that he straightened his legs and became absorbed in the gaiety of the scene. Not for some time did he remember that the young master had been entrusted to his care. In dread he put his hand behind his back, but the child was no longer there. Anxiously he gazed about, but his charge was nowhere to be seen.

Overcome by an agony of fear and remorse he tried to search for the child but so hemmed in was he that at first he could not move. He strove till his bones were weak and his muscles numbed. Eventually he succeeded in forcing his way to a spot where the crowd was somewhat less dense and there he found other retainers of Hsiang Min Kung.

"Have you seen anything of the young master?"

"Why do you ask us? The young master was entrusted to you."

"I was where the crowd was most dense," said Wang Chi miserably, "and someone took him off my back. I thought one of you, my brothers from the yamen, seeing that my strength was failing, had relieved me of him for a little. The crowd was so thick I could not see who had come to my aid. Are you telling me that you have not seen him?"

"You fool," they cried, alarmed. "You go about

in a crowd like that and lose the child. Then you come here, where is no crowd, to look for him. You are wasting time. We must all go into the throng and try to find him."

They went back and one pushed one way and another that, calling and shouting for the lost boy, but the noise and bustle was so great they could not make themselves heard. Hoarse with shouting and tired of pushing through dense masses of people they presently met again, but no one had anything to report.

"One of the party must have found him and carried him home."

"But all of us are here," objected the others.

"In any case," said Wang Chi, "we had better go home and find out."

"I am afraid he will not have been taken home," said the eldest retainer. "The cap on his head is valuable and some evildoer has stolen it and the child as well. We had better not alarm the ladies but go to the master and tell him. He can have runners sent out to find the thief."

When Wang Chi heard that the matter must be reported to his master he became limp with fear.

"What is this talk of telling the master?" he asked. "Let us first make further enquiry. To alarm all in the yamen without justification would be a mistake."

But as no one else was of this mind, they went home and at once made careful enquiry as to whether anyone indoors had seen the young master. No one had and there was no help for it but to report his loss to his father. As nobody dared to say straight out that the boy had been lost a good deal of hesitation and stammering ensued.

The nervousness of his servants did not escape the notice of Hsiang Min Kung.

"You did not stay out long," he said. "What made

you return so early and what is the matter with you all? You look frightened."

They told him Wang Chi had lost the young master in the crowd, and Wang himself came forward and, kneeling down, kotowed and declared that death ought to be the punishment of his carelessness.

To their amazement Hsiang Min Kung did not betray any alarm.

"He will come back by himself without fail," he said with a smile. "There is no reason for anyone to be distressed."

"But an evildoer may have stolen him," they ventured. "O pray, sir, notify the Governor of the city that runners may be sent to search for him."

Hsiang Min Kung shook his head.

"There is no need," he said.

His serenity was not shared by his servants. "This master," they said among themselves, "is as important as the sky is vast, and as pressing as a conflagration. How can His Excellency regard it as a common occurrence, neither changing countenance nor showing emotion? His mind appears to be as unclouded as a cup of melted snow!" So disturbed were they that they reported the matter to their mistress who was behind the curtain.

She immediately hurried to the yamen and with tears in her eyes implored her husband to take steps for the recovery of the child.

"If it were any other that had been lost," he said to her, "I would have at once taken steps to find him. But my son Thirteen is different from other children. Without doubt he will come back safely. Do not fear."

"But," returned his wife, "even though this son of yours be clever, he is young and very small, a babe but five years old. In so great a crowd he could easily

be knocked down and crushed to death. How can you expect him to return unaided?"

The nurses talked among themselves. "Evil men are constantly stealing children. They put out their eyes or cut off their feet! They have a thousand ways of injuring them so that by exciting compassion they may be more successful in obtaining alms. If a search is not made at once, the young master will fall a victim to them."

And the women fell a-weeping and lamenting. "If His Excellency will not order the Governor to make a search," they cried, "he might at least proclaim that a reward will be given to whomsoever shall bring back the child."

A scene of confusion arose, each giving advice and expressing opinions; but Hsiang Min Kung was not to be moved.

"You are all talking quite unnecessarily," he said. "The boy will return in safety during the course of the next few days."

"The precious little jewel," said his wife. "How can you remain so calm and speak of him so callously?"

"Put your trust in me," replied Hsiang Min Kung, "for I am responsible. He will be restored to you."

His wife, however, was not to be comforted and as the nurses and servants also put no faith in what their master had said, messengers were sent out in all directions to look for the boy.

II

I must now relate how it had happened that Nan Kai had been stolen from the back of Wang Chi and what had happened to him.

They two were in the thick of the crowd and everyone round was pushing and shouting when a man standing by Wang, reached out and very gently lifted

the child from the servant's back. Wang Chi was absorbed in the spectacle, Nan Kai too, and neither noticed what had happened to themselves.

When the stranger had settled the boy firmly on his back he began to push his way out of the throng, and it was then that Nan Kai perceived a difference. "Wang Chi," he said, "where are you going in such a hurry?"

Looking down he saw that it was not Wang Chi who held him, but a stranger, a man wearing a different cap and clothes. Although the child was young, he had sense and guessed that an evildoer was seeking to kidnap him. He looked anxiously for someone who might help him but saw no face that he recognized. Therefore he did not shout.

"The man wishes to steal my pearl cap," he said to himself, "and if he succeeds in carrying it off it will never be seen again. I will hide it." Taking off the cap, therefore, he stuffed it up his sleeve, but otherwise allowed the man to carry him away as if he had not noticed any change in his bearer.

On reaching the East Gate of the Imperial City the boy noticed that four or five sedan chairs were being carried toward him, one behind the other.

"These chairs probably contain officials or people of rank," he said to himself, "and if I do not seize this opportunity I may not get another." As soon as the foremost chair was opposite to him, therefore, he reached out suddenly and laid hold of the pole, shouting as loudly as he could: "Thieves! Thieves! Save me! Save me!"

The kidnapper, when he heard the screams at his back was so much taken by surprise and so much afraid of being captured that he threw off Nan Kai and, darting into the crowd, made off as quickly as he could.

The occupants of the chairs hearing the screams,

looked between the curtains to see what was the matter. Observing on the ground a dear little child, with clean face and newly shaven head, they stopped the chairs. One beckoned Nan Kai to get up and draw near.

"I was being kidnapped," said the child.

"Where is the one that was taking you away?" asked the man in the foremost chair.

"When I called out," replied the child, "he ran off into the crowd. I cannot see him anywhere now."

The man, perceiving that the boy answered sensibly, stroked his head and, telling him not to be alarmed, took him into the chair and placed him on his knee. The bearers then went on, entering the Palace by the eastern gate.

The man in the chair was one of the Palace eunuchs, a person of importance. When the Emperor had taken his fill of the sights of the city, this eunuch had been sent to the palace to prepare a meal for His Majesty.

On arrival the eunuch ordered his attendants to take the child to his own rooms, and after wrapping him up warmly to give him fruit and sweetmeats; and he charged them strictly that the little boy was not in any way to be frightened.

Next morning early the eunuch went into the Imperial presence and after kotowing made memorial as follows:

"The Heir of the Ages is informed that Your slaves, after attending on Your Majesty at the Lantern Festival last night, found a lost child outside the East Gate of the Imperial City. Hoping it was a lucky omen for Your Majesty's prospects of an heir we brought him back with us. It is not yet known to what household the child belongs, nor, without Your Majesty's commands, have we ventured to dispose of him. We have come to request that orders be issued."

The Emperor Shen Tsung not having as yet had an

heir born to him the matter had been exercising his mind. He welcomed the eunuch's suggestion.

"This may well prove an auspicious omen," he agreed. His heavenly countenance was suffused with joy and he had the child brought before him.

As the eunuch led Nan Kai into the room he uttered a warning.

"The Sacred One has ordered you to be brought into the Presence. When you enter, do not be afraid."

Nan Kai understood that this meant he was to see the Emperor. He put his hand into his sleeve, pulled out his pearl cap and put it on his head. Although the little fellow had no idea as to the proper ceremonial to be observed, as soon as he came into the Emperor's presence he put his fists together and kneeling down kotowed several times.

The Son of Heaven stamped his feet in pleasure at the sight.

"Little boy," he said, "whose son are you and what is your name?"

Nan Kai straightened himself before replying. "Your servant's surname is Wang, and I am the youngest son of Your Majesty's minister Wang Chao."

The Emperor, surprised to find that the boy spoke simply and unhesitatingly, continued to question him. "How did you come here?"

"Because of the festival last night," replied Nan Kai. "Our household went to see the illuminations and gaze on Your Majesty's Sacred Countenance. In the crowd a thief lifted me off my servant's back. As he sped away with me I saw the Palace chairs coming and called for help. The thief ran off and your servant was brought by their Excellencies, the honourable eunuchs, to this place. I have thus been able to achieve the good fortune of an Audience with Your Majesty."

"How old are you?" asked the Emperor.

"Five years old, Your Majesty."

"Since at so tender an age you are able so well to answer my questions your father is to be congratulated on his son. So you were lost last night? How anxious all at your home must be. We must send you back at once—but it is to be regretted that the thief was not caught."

"Your Majesty," ventured Nan Kai, "it should be an easy matter to find him."

"How can that be done?"

"When he carried me off on his back I took off my pearl cap and hid it. On this cap, Your Majesty, my mother to avert evil had left a silken string to which the needle was still attached. Pulling out this thread I sewed it into his collar. If Your Majesty will command that spies be sent out and they look for a man with a piece of silk thread stitched into the collar of his coat, they may find the man who last night tried to kidnap me."

This speech startled the Emperor.

"What a remarkable child!" he exclaimed. "So small and yet so full of resource. We must keep him here till the thief has been caught." Turning to the attendant eunuchs, he added, "We must show this child to the ladies of the Palace," and he sent an urgent message to the Empress Ch'in Sheng.

As soon as the Imperial orders had been transmitted, the Empress came.

"Here is a good child," said the Emperor after receiving her salutation. "You may keep him for awhile in the Palace. Look after him well, for he may prove an auspicious omen in the matter of an heir to the throne."

The Empress Ch'in Sheng was full of curiosity. Said the Emperor to her, "If you wish to know why

the child is here, take him into your rooms and ask him and he will tell you."

When the Empress had taken Nan Kai away, the Emperor wrote a secret order for the Governor of the city. In it was set forth details of the stealing and a limit of time given for the arrest of the thief.

When the Governor received the order he perceived that no delay was permissible. He sent for the officer of the day, Taotai Ho.

"Today I have received a secret order from His Majesty," said the Governor to this officer, "and I give you three days in which to arrest a band of criminals who committed a theft on the night of the Feast of Lanterns."

"Is there any clue, or have you information concerning the goods that were stolen?" asked the Taotai.

The Governor bade the Taotai come near and whispered to him the story of the silken thread which had been stitched into the thief's collar; and when the Taotai heard he said the criminal should be arrested within three days provided secrecy was observed.

The Taotai went to his office and called together the most astute of the police runners.

"There must have been many who took advantage of the Feast of Lanterns to commit crimes, and a number of households will have suffered. Although this particular child was recovered, the thefts must in many cases have been successful, consequently the thieves will be spending their ill-gotten gains in the wine shops and low haunts of the city, and we should be able to find them."

That night they went out, some in one direction, some in another, for all knew the lie of the streets and where the tea houses and wine shops were to be found. In each they searched carefully for suspicious

characters, listening behind doors and peeping around corners.

III

The thief who had abducted the little son of Wang went by the name of the Hawk. He had a band of a dozen men and their custom was to mingle with any crowd they saw, and make it an opportunity for their nefarious purposes.

The Hawk, on the previous day, had lurked about the gates of the Wang household watching those who went in and out. On perceiving the young master on the back of a servant, he had followed them. When they reached the Gate of Virtue Manifest, where the crowd was thickest, he seized his chance and lifting the child from the servant's to his own back went off with him. He anticipated no difficulty whatever with the child, for beyond crying and being frightened what could it do? He was therefore amazed beyond measure when the boy raised a cry for help. Dropping him hastily he made off, unaware that on his collar was a mark by which he might afterward be recognized.

Having made good his escape he rejoined his confederates. The others produced their plunder. Women's hair ornaments, gold and jewels, pearl and jade, sable ear-caps, foxtail wraps and other valuables. Only the leader was empty-handed.

When he explained why, they asked why he had not taken off the child's cap and let him go.

"His clothes were covered with jewels and valuable buttons," replied the Hawk. "On his arms and ankles were bands of gold and he himself would have fetched two thousand cash. It would have been foolish of me to let him go."

"You bit off so big a mouthful," said the others, "that you were unable to chew it."

"Only when we got near the Palace chairs did he scream," protested the thief. "The attendants were as fierce as tigers and that they did not capture me was a heaven-sent stroke of luck. In such circumstances how could I hope for gain?"

"You have had an evil experience," said his friends, "and it is lucky that nothing worse befell you. Now let us eat and drink and forget our troubles."

The custom of the band was that members should take it in turn to act as host and they now selected a wine shop near the Jade Ferry Gardens that was but little frequented. It chanced that Li Yuan, one of the police spies, was making enquiries in that neighbourhood. As he passed the wine shop he heard the thieves shouting over a game of forfeits, and being a shrewd man went in to take stock of them. To his mind the group had a suspicious appearance and, in order to observe them more closely, he sat down and ordered a meal.

While the attendant was placing the wine cup and chopsticks on the table, the spy, with his hands behind his back, walked up and down as if in thought. In reality he was scrutinizing each man out of the corner of his eye. Sure enough, one among them showed beneath his collar a thread of coloured silk.

"Kindly delay a little with my wine and food," he said to the attendant. "I wish to fetch a friend to share my meal."

As soon as he was outside he whistled shrilly and was at once joined by seven or eight others.

"The man we seek is in there," and he pointed to the wine shop. "I am certain it is he, but his band is with him. If we are to arrest all of them we must have more men to help us."

One of the posse made off like the wind, to return with ten more runners. They burst into the wine shop,

shouting, "In the name of the Emperor! We have come to arrest a thief and we call on the inmates of this house to help us by preventing his escape."

At the name of the Emperor, the inmates of the wine shop realized the matter was serious and waiters, cooks and scullions armed with knives and pokers rushed in to help. Thus, of the gang of thieves, not one escaped.

These two bands of men, runners and thieves, knew each other well. The runners had accepted money from the thieves—to be applied to charitable purposes —in order that the thieves might be free to ply their trade in peace, or should a member of the party be arrested to purchase his freedom.

On this occasion, however, the Emperor, setting a limit of time, had commanded their arrest. Moreover, the thread on the collar of their leader proved their guilt, so their release was not a matter that could be entertained.

The coat of the leader having been removed all were securely bound. Quaking with terror, their faces pale as dust, not one but was vehement in protestations of innocence. On being searched, however, booty of various sorts was found on all and they were therefore marched off at once to the yamen of the Governor.

The Governor, having examined the leader's coat and found a silken thread sewn through the collar, went into the court. He ordered the attendants to bring out the instruments of torture that the robbers might be persuaded to make confession.

They were bent backward over a frame, their hands and feet were drawn together with ropes, they were loaded with weights, suspended by their thumbs, beaten with heavy bamboos. Their sufferings were intense yet so hardened were they, and so stubborn, that no confession could be extorted.

At length the Governor produced the coat with the incriminating thread stitched into the collar.

"How came this thread on your coat?" he asked the leader; but the man, knowing nothing of the matter answered foolishly and at random.

"This," said the Governor with a smile, "is a new way of catching thieves, invented by a child. At the Feast of Lanterns when you passed the Palace chairs, a child cried out for help. It was then that the proof of your identity was sewn into your coat. Of what avail then is your continued denial of your evil doing?"

The thief, perceiving that the child whom he had tried to steal had betrayed him to justice, made confession of his misdeeds. He told that for many years he had taken advantage of festival gatherings to reap a harvest by robbing and kidnapping, that he had made away with many little girls and boys, sometimes selling them, sometimes, if no ransom was forthcoming, killing them.

The Governor interrogated the rest of the band and notes were taken of their answers. When his report was ready he memorialized the Throne for confirmation of the sentence of death which he had imposed.

"On the night of the Feast of Lanterns this year, the acts of these criminals were confined to thieving.

"But their misdeeds on previous occasions have outraged all the proprieties.

"Such people are the most obscene of creatures, rivalling the Hsiao and the Ching * which devour their own parents.

"How can they be permitted to pollute the air in the vicinity of the Throne?

* Beyond the fact that the Hsiao (an owl) and the Ching (a quadruped) are supposed by devouring their parents to commit the most heinous crime in nature, nothing is known of these creatures.

"They should without doubt be executed that peace may prevail in the Imperial City!"

This memorial was read by the Emperor Shen Tsung and when he saw that the gang had been arrested, he smiled and his Dragon Face was suffused with joy. "It was due to the forethought of the child," he said and ordered the Board of Punishments to see that the execution of the band was forthwith carried out.

When the malefactors' heads had been cut off the Governor reported the fact to the Emperor and submitted a complete record of the case. The Emperor received the memorial, and, placing it in his sleeve, retired with a smile of satisfaction into his private apartments.

IV

The Empress Ch'ing Shen, having expressed her thanks for the favour done her that the child from outside should be entrusted to her as a good omen for the birth of an heir to the throne, led the boy to her own place. Here she made enquiry as to what had brought him to the Palace and Nan Kai answered with a readiness equal to the flowing of water. As he seemed at his ease, laughing and playing as if he were in his own home, the Empress took him on her lap and ordered the attendants to bring out her dressing-case. She braided his hair anew and placed a spot of vermilion on his forehead, making him appear even more beautiful.

The concubines of the Palace, hearing the Empress had received the child as a gift from the Emperor, came to visit him and to express their good wishes to the Empress for the birth of an heir. As no male child had as yet been seen in the Palace he was looked on as a curiosity and when they saw how glossy were his eyebrows, how bright his eyes, how red his lips, how

white his teeth and how readily and brightly he spoke on any subject, all loved him. And though they loved him for himself, they took the more care of him in their wish to please the Empress, and bringing out their valuables—gold, pearls, bracelets, earrings—they gave of these to Nan Kai as "first sight" gifts, one vying with another as to who should put most into his sleeves.

The Empress told a eunuch to put the presents away for the child and gave the little boy leave to go where he would within the precincts of the Palace. He wandered hither and thither at will, giving joy to all whom he encountered, for each was glad to see the boy—so novel a sight.

Ten days passed and one evening the Emperor, coming to visit the Empress ordered the child to be brought before him.

"I pray Your Majesty," said the Empress, "that You will allow me to keep him a little longer. Though he is living in a Palace he takes it as naturally as if he had been here all his life."

"You must hear what he did," replied the Emperor. "A large gang of robbers have been captured owing to him. He sewed a silken thread to the collar of the leader who had kidnapped him. Not one robber escaped, they were all executed. The child is of great resource but it is to be feared his parents do not know he is here and will be greatly distressed by his absence. We must send him back."

On hearing these words Nan Kai kotowed his thanks to the Emperor and orders were given that the eunuch who had brought him to the Palace should restore him to his home. The Emperor then bestowed on the child a wine cup of carved rhinoceros-horn in a casket, which cup was to dispel his fears on the way.

The Empress was unwilling he should go, and gave

him many more presents which, with those he had already received, were packed into boxes and entrusted to the eunuch to deliver to his parents. A cart was presently prepared to carry the child and his escort. Within it Nan Kai sat on the eunuch's knee. Thus they came to the Wang household.

V

In Hsiang Min Kung's house was no one, great or small, who did not regret with tears and lamentations the loss of the boy, and scheme to recover him. Only Hsiang Min Kung himself was not disturbed, nor would he order that search should be made.

After some days a runner brought a message from the Palace. A eunuch was on his way, and he bore a command in writing from the Emperor, which command was to be opened and read to Wang Chao.

Hsiang Min Kung could not guess what this might mean. He ordered the best guest chamber to be got ready and had a table of incense set out for the reception of the Emperor's message. When the cart arrived at the door, he donned his official hat and robes of ceremony and, tablet in hand, prostrated himself to hear the Imperial Order.

The eunuch alighted with Nan Kai in his arms and when the servants, who were gathered behind their master, saw that it was indeed the young master come back, they waved their arms and stamped their feet in a joy they were unable to restrain.

"Hearken to the Imperial Orders," cried the eunuch. "Thus commands the Emperor:

"Wang Chao, you my Minister, upon the night of the Feast of Lanterns, lost a child. We, the Emperor, found this child and this day We restore him to you. With him we send boxes containing things given to him to dispel fear. These things are now presented

to him and to you in recognition of his unusual intelligence.

"A respectful attention should be given to Our commands."

The eunuch directly addressed Hsiang Min Kung. "You sir, have a remarkable son."

"Why should you think so?" asked the happy father.

In answer the eunuch pulled from his sleeve a thick scroll of writing.

"Should you wish to know in what manner your son was lost and found again, this report will enlighten you."

Hsiang Min Kung took the scroll and saw it was a report from the Governor upon the trial of a kidnapper. He read that the man had been arrested on account of secret orders from the Emperor.

"If my son at an age when he yet smells of his mother's milk," said Hsiang Min Kung, "attracts the notice of the Son of Heaven and causes that Holy One to be concerned about him so that the thief was arrested, I could not repay one ten-thousandth part of the Holy favour shown, were I to have my body pounded to pieces and my bones ground to powder."

"That the robbers were arrested was owing to the child's action," replied the eunuch with a smile. "The Emperor followed Nan Kai's suggestions. Therein lies the savour of the tale."

At this point Nan Kai took up his tale and related his adventures on the night of the Feast of Lanterns. He told of having seen the Emperor and prostrated himself before the Empress and his telling was as the flowing of water.

When the servants, who had gathered round the inner door of the courtyard to listen to the Emperor's commands heard of his adventures, they understood

that their master had been justified. No search was necessary for so resourceful a child.

Hsiang Min Kung ordered wine to be brought and a meal to be served to the eunuch, whereupon that one brought out the cup to dispel fear which the Emperor had presented. Also the other presents. These when set out in a row were enough to fill a room. The sparkling of the jewels dazzled the eye and their value was not less than many tens of thousands of taels.

"Here, my little brother," said the eunuch putting his hand on the child's head, "is enough to keep you supplied with sweetmeats for evermore. " And Hsiang Min Kung kotowed his thanks in the direction of the Palace.

His writer was then told to indite a memorial of thanks to the Emperor and this was given to the eunuch to deliver to the Son of Heaven. Hsiang Min Kung also asked that he might be received in Audience with his son the following morning so that he could express his thanks in person.

"It was by me," said the eunuch, "that your son was encountered and taken to meet the Emperor. I, too, would give him a slight present as a remembrance."

He took out two ingots of silver, four lengths of satin and four lengths of thinner silk. These Hsiang Min Kung would have refused but the eunuch would not take back his gifts, so Hsiang Min Kung retained them and gave in return a handsome present. The eunuch then returned to the Palace, and when he had been sped on his way, Hsiang Min Kung and his household gave themselves up to rejoicing.

"Did I not tell you there was no need for uneasiness concerning my son Thirteen, for that he would without doubt return unaided?" asked Hsiang Min Kung. "Not only has he done that but he has brought with him many presents bestowed by the Imperial favour

and has been the sole cause of the capture of a band of robbers. Perhaps you can now understand why I was not fearful on his account."

All agreed that these words were just.

In after years Nan Kai was known as Wang Ts'ai, and in the period known as Cheng Ho (1111-1118) he was widely reputed as a scholar. He also rose to power as an official, thus fulfilling the promise of his youth.

THE BLASTED OAK

By C. A. Dawson-Scott

EDITH PRIN had gone to the gate of the farmyard for a break in the September quiet after her hardworking, yet leisurely, day. Her husband and two stepsons were at Summercourt Horse Fair and their absence had given her time to make blackberry jam "against the winter." She had strained it, filled the unequal-sized jars and bottles, and carried them to the attic. In the days when she had been farm-girl under Mrs. Prin, she had thought the clob house might have been improved by a few shelves and cupboards. Now, however, that she stood in Mrs. Prin's shoes, she found that with three men to cook for and clean after, the milk and the chickens to see to, she had not the energy to get the shelves and cupboards made. In the old way, therefore, she had ranged the jars on the attic table.

Leaning her elbows on the top of the gate, she looked up the moorland road along which her men would return to her. On either side of it were fields that had been hardly won from the waste, that still showed outcrops of rock. The house from which she was come, was only clay taken from a wet meadow and

set up to stiffen in the sun. The grey ring of outhouses was of the rock itself.

Summercourt Horse Fair was, for the downs folk, the great day of the year; and Edith, being young, had wished to go. It had not occurred to Farmer, her middle-aged husband, to take her. He was not going for the fun of it, but to buy a new cart-horse.

Very shortly after their marriage, he had seemed to forget that Edith was not the woman by whose side he had lived for so many years; he had even at times called her Alice. At first his forgetfulness had hurt, but Farmer did not notice. What did a name matter, or indeed a woman, so long as the work was done and his home a comfortable place to return to at the end of the day?

Edith had more to do than when her mistress was alive. Then she, herself, had helped; now there was no one else. Farmer thought that if she wanted someone in to give a hand she would say so. It was her affair. As a matter of fact Edith liked being by herself, yet was conscious of a lack. At the moment she thought it was that she had wanted to go to the Fair. As she stood at the gate, she remembered the swings, the quoits, the booths.

If there had been anything to keep her at home—but the old wooden cradle stood empty and dusty in the attic. She had glanced at it, thoughtfully, when she had set down her tray of jam.

She could so well have gone to the Fair.

Last year, Bob, the third of her stepsons, had taken her and she had enjoyed it very much, the crowds of people, and the fine horses, and the whirligigs. Now Bob was working in an African Deep and there was no one who thought of her other than as a sort of churn that turned the rough of everyday into comfort.

What could she expect? The boys were kind

enough, but they had their sweethearts. And Farmer? Fifty he was and married to "Old Missis since they was —both on'm—twenty-one. You couldn't expect him to be different." When Missis died, Edith, thinking it wouldn't be right for her to stop on without another woman in the house, had given him notice. Farmer had been a bit vexed, had muttered about "getting silly ideas in yer head," and then had asked her to stay as his wife. She had not wished to marry him, but she could not think of any reason to refuse. Her way was to do the job that came next, for that got you, somehow, to the end of the day.

She had never had a fancy-chap, and everybody got married, some time or other. Farmer was all right, a fine man for his time of life, still—she could have wished things had fallen out differently. She did not know in what way; but, well—

By now he must be on his way back with the new horse. No reason to stay for the dancing, and he did not approve of theatres and the like. Joe and Charl would take their girls, but the father would come home. Also he would be more tired than after a heavy day's ploughing. . . . He couldn't stand the noise of the Fair. . . .

She had his supper ready. After it he would sit in shirt sleeves and stocking feet, nodding off to sleep over a pipe till it was time for bed. It would not be long before he came round the far end of the road.

For some time she had been aware of a faint sound, at first a mere unbelievable breath, then a distant note, a sequence of notes. Very far away, almost a nothing and yet clear. They pierced the stillness like arrows, silver, almost invisible arrows. They fell spent before they reached Edith's inattentive ear, yet sank at length into her consciousness. She doubted that she heard.

When she could no longer doubt, she wondered over the notes—a tune—but one unknown to her. A strange tune and it was more than a tune, for it held a personal quality of mood. In the end she wondered, not over the tune but the player. He seemed to be singing—playing—to someone, to be calling.

Who could he be? She knew all the dwellers on the downs. And he was coming towards her along the road.

Instead of the burly farmer in his gig, with the new horse following, a bunch of Goss Moor ponies came round the corner. The little animals were fastened together, and from the halter of the midmost hung a rope, a rope held by the man in charge. They advanced slowly, feeding as they came, and the man took advantage of their occupied progress to blow his troubling music into the ear of the world.

Though Edith Prin enjoyed country music, the old songs and the new, there was a fire in this, a recurrent note that she found disturbing. The man would be some dealer, on his way from Summercourt at one end of the moors to Bodmin at the other. No one she knew. She might yield then to her wish to listen, might respond—silently—with the tale of her only half-understood dissatisfactions. To be so young and yet married! To have married without knowing the sweet uncertainties of courtship! To have inherited another woman's children, grown men at that, and to have her own arms empty.

The flute-player, he also had missed or not yet found contentment. His notes held, not merely yearning but a demand, the demand every creature makes of life. Edith dared not move, lest she startle the ponies, wild creatures at the best and, if frightened, capable of clearing the nearest hedge and stretching across country as if still on the open moor. Motionless, she leaned

against the gate, hearing through the clear and now poignantly sweet notes, a crisp tearing of grass.

She did not think the man would see her—a still figure is a bit of the landscape—and she was curious as to who it might be, wanted "to catch a sight of'n." An odd sort of dealer this, to be playing himself home from Summercourt! It wasn't—well, not what any ordinary man would do. He might whistle, might even sing, but—not play the flute!

Then she saw. . . .

The man was a gipsy!

A mile or two further on, after the road had forked, was Gipsy Corner. The last of the rough land, it had a spring and was never without a sprinkling of queerly shaped tents. The straggling community endured their presence, for the gipsy nibble was like that of the rick rats, hardly felt by the prosperous farmers.

As the ponies, having seen nothing to alarm them, passed the gate, Edith looked up—to realize that for a long time he had been aware of her. He ceased playing, took the flute from his lips and, across the little space of dusty road, their glances met. Though the afternoon was waning, the light was still good. It showed her to be a tall ripe woman, with a grave face. Red were her lips and the eyes under black brows were soft.

It showed him too! Lithe was he as a snake and of a darkness, skin and hair, that made her appear fair, she who was moorland dark. His glance was fierce and thrusting, the glance of a man who comes to instant decisions, who does not claim but takes. It met hers and to Edith it was as if the flame of it were a beam entering, lighting up her heart; as if the ache of her disappointment with life had been made clear to him. She drew back, half-afraid.

The gipsy's easy stride faltered, and he almost

stopped. Then, with a smile and quick, proud lift of the head, he went down the road, his flute to his lips. But he was no longer blowing his notes, those wild beseeching and yet insistent notes, into the deaf ear of the world.

The mare Jabez Prin had bought at Summercourt was a bargain. He was so much elated that—an unusual thing for him—he talked while he ate his tea, and talked on afterwards, sitting in his old cooper chair and telling over how he had got the better of Hedley Bragg. Edith listened dutifully yet without altogether taking in what he said and, once his weariness had got the better of him, she took the stocking she was knitting and went to the door-sill. The moon would give her enough light and she liked to sit out in the covering night—the night that had been made for the young folk, for their courting.

For a time she knitted briskly, her glance on the dark wool and shining needles. She had set a cushion on the step and was sitting with her back against the worn wood of the doorway. Above her head a little penthouse of slate kept the drive of the weather from the floor and beyond it lay open yard and the elms of the moorland village. Below the trees was a quick slope to the one spring, then a rise in the land and, gradually, the breaking into bracken, into close heather, into snuffy ground where white stones were set in dry black earth. Edith heard the quaver of the owls and nearer a stir among the chickens and the deep breathing of bullocks kept in to fatten.

Did she or did she not hear another sound? She paused in her quick knitting and lifted her head. It seemed to her that from far away came a faint but recollected sequence of notes. But did she hear or was she only remembering? The sound—yes, 'twas a

sound and it was growing in volume. Not coming nearer, but taking on a passionate quality. Her hands fell idle in her lap and she sat looking out into the night.

Later, she heard the music in her sleeping dreams.

But by the following evening, when as usual she took her knitting into the dusk, she had convinced herself that she had not really heard—the notes had played themselves, glamorously, inside her head; and she should be ashamed of having thought twice about them. Yet, as she sat on her cushion in the moonlight, the playing began again.

Edith Prin was the child of a cottager. Born in the elm-shadowed village, she had trudged her mile and a half to the tiny church school on the hill, and when she was fourteen had gone as servant to the nearest farm. She knew of nothing but the great downs and the folks who made a living on their slopes; and she was of those who look neither before nor after. Because she knew herself needed, she had married Jabez Prin; but as she sat on the drexel with the moonlight turning the countryside into a fairyland of black and white, she wondered why she had been in such a hurry. It was as if the music from far away were troubling her quietude of a married woman, showing her things of which, hitherto, she had been ignorant.

A hand held, the touch that was magic, that set a strange stir behind her breast, that was a sweet fire that burned yet did not burn.

She got up restlessly. For one who had missed them, such things did not bear thinking on. It hurt, so it did, hurt cruelly and what had she done in her innocent, well-meaning life to be so hurt? She turned to another thought, one not much safer.

Was it in truth the gipsy who was fluting? Why should he? The question frightened her, and she gave

—as do all women—an insincere answer. Gipsy Corner was fully three miles on the way to Triggyveal. The road forked, going up to Bodmin, going down to the riverside town. On the right beyond the fork, was the bare space of the encampment, the low brown tents. Moorland air is very clear—he was, of course, playing to other gipsies. . . .

She found she could not stay out. Little clouds were riding like white witches across the sky and she was as one who has been ill-wished. She was restless, unable to settle to her work. She went early overstairs. Farmer was already a-bed. Good, heavy man, he worked hard and slept well. Edith blew out her candle and sat at the window. The music—that music which was being played for other ears—was still floating toward her through the blue space between earth and sky, was still falling on her heart like one of those showers in spring under which the seeds swell to their first leaves.

Her window faced east and with the change from moon-tempered dark to the little wind, the quick pallor of dawn, the music ceased.

That night Joe came in to supper with the news that two of the young cockerels had disappeared. "Braäve-looking stags they was, best of the lot."

Jabez Prin clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth. "Too many gippos down to the Corner. Time some of them went up country. I reckon the downs has had its share of'n."

Edith found herself suddenly indignant. She saw the gipsy-folk busy about their tents, happy. "They've always claimed the Corner."

Charl looked up from his plate. "Funny thing you telling about they gippos. I've seen one hanging about here the last day or two."

"I wonder what he's after?"

"You may depend he edn't after work." And, to Edith's deepening indignation, the men laughed. "I bet a shilling he know what has become of they stags."

"He is a queer fellow."

Charl was courting one of Hoblyn's daughters and Hoblyn had a farm on the top of the hill. "Every night when I come along home, he'm settin' on the Blasted Oak, and what do 'ee think chap's doing?"

"I can't tell 'ee."

"Why, he'm playing music. Set there by the hour he do with his old flute."

"After some woman, I expect," grunted Mr. Prin, and once more Edith's heart was angered. She was sure he wasn't, she knew it; he was playing—well, to amuse himself.

"No, he'm always by hisself. His music—" Charl paused for a word. He had felt the magic of that fluting. "Almost make your heart stand still, so it do."

"Aw—get away."

"At any rate," said Mr. Prin, "you know where to find him." He split a bread bun and spread it with cream and treacle.

His sons gave no sign that they knew what he meant. "Mischeevious dragons, don't take nothing they can't reach," grumbled Joe, but without rancour. "I 'spose 'twas they set fire to Collicot's mowhay last year."

Edith interposed. "Twadn't proved they done it."

"Who could have done it else?"

"Anybody setting in the hay, smoking."

"And who d'yer think would set there besides a gipsy? A decent man sets indoors."

"Don't want him setting fire to our ricks." Jabez Prin stood up, spoke with authority, an authority which his sons, easy-natured as had been their mother, would not dream of disputing. "You boys had better lay

wait for'n tonight and learn him not to come where he bain't wanted."

Edith's face grew hot. She wasn't afraid of Farmer. "Two to one," she said, " 'tedn't fair."

Prin looked surprised. It was as if his own ram had butted him. "Nonsense," he said, "for varmints like they anything's fair." His voice told her that she had interfered in a matter that did not concern women, but she was beyond caring. Two to one, and they great chaps like Joe and Charl. She pushed back her chair, her mind in tumult.

"Well—I be going out."

"Where be going this time of day?"

"Over to Cranza. Mrs. Collicot asked me to call in."

" 'Tis pretty and laäte to go trapsing over there." Farmer had a dim recollection of times when his first wife had been difficult. He remembered, too, the reason and looked anxiously across at Edith. A pity she was so young—at his time of life children about the house—well, well, if it was so he must make the best of it. He spoke soothingly. "Better fit you stop home till morning."

"Stop home?" cried Edith, in sudden upheaval. "For all any of you care I mightn't go outside the door from one end of the year to the other."

Her husband began to fill his pipe. "Well, well, go on with 'ee, and see you don't get caught in one of they sinky-pits to Water Park." But she was moorland bred, she would not get bogged in the marshy ground by the river.

Edith ran up to her room and, looking in the small square mirror on the toilet table, was for a moment taken aback. An unaccountable rose warmed her cheeks, a light as of reflected stars shone in her eyes. She told herself she didn't belong to look like that—it was as if she had been a maid going to meet her

sweetheart, whereas she was only set on preventing harm from overtaking the innocent.

She had been annoyed with Farmer and the boys. That was why her heart beat so she hardly knew what she was doing.

She found, too, that her knees were trembling, but—she could not let him be hurt . . . no, no indeed; and she forgot her hat, went as she was out of the house and through the village.

The Blasted Oak, a stripped white skeleton of a tree, stood at the corner of Farmer's last field. Below it lay marshy ground over which a meandering path led to Cranza, and beyond was the open moor. Edith paused by the oak. Here then, was where he had come to make his strange music. A branch, that might serve as a seat, stood out from the bole and she laid a kind hand on it, visualizing him as he had sat, night after night, fluting. Why had he troubled to come—to come all the way from Gipsy Corner? To what end had he poured his wild music into the night? What—her heart so burned in her breast that she almost dropped, there, at the foot of the tree—what did he want?

No matter, that! She had come to warn him, to tell him he must not come to the Oak, that Joe and Charl would be lying in wait for him, that they were going to hurt him, break his magic. She did not think of the gipsy as a man like those she knew, the men with whom life was prose; but as someone half-pisky, a creature belonging to a world not altogether workaday. That he should steal cockerels, cheat over horse-jobbing, fire an occasional rick, did not make any difference. She had her own standards, the standards of a woman, not of a man.

Joe and Charl should not find him at the Oak.

She went up the road. The land on each side was

rough, warm-tinted moor; and the road lifted, ran along the breast of a hill. Remote from it, each in its surrounding of buildings, squatted the occasional grey farm. She knew the dwellers in every house, knew them as drab and shadowy folk with whose lives she was conversant as she might have been with the stories in a Sunday School prize. She did not pause till she came to the fork where the road dipped to Triggyveal, where it rose to Bodmin.

Bodmin was "a city set on a hill." The Beacon could be seen from all quarters of the moor and the downs folk regarded it as the end of their world. Standing high, the town looked towards the rich lands of Devon, towards what was to such as Edith, a new country, the inhabitants of which were foreigners. She stayed her steps by the sign-post with the directing arms and waited in the oncoming dusk. Around and above her were the hills, the loneliness.

It might be that she had had her walk for nothing, that he would not come. He had swung along the road at dusk every evening since Summercourt Horse Fair, had sat on the oak bough fluting, but when a man gets no response he presently falls silent. Or he goes sorrowfully away and, in the end, flutes to some kinder ear.

Need for a warning might not have existed! She might had been mistaken, yes, and altogether mistaken. . . . Oh, shaäme! Waiting at the fork, with the dark flowing down the western slopes and along the eastern sky, she began to fear. Another minute and she would turn, go humbly back, and across her spirit would lie as a red weal, that unforgetable shame. That she should have imagined. . . .

A blackness of bushes about the foot of the sign-post, then a taller blackness and she was looking into

his eyes. She had neither heard nor seen him, yet he was there.

She was surprised into breathlessness, conscious only of a need to explain. He must not guess—but there was nothing to guess. "You—" she said hurriedly, "you must not go to the Oak."

The twilight was not too dense for him to see the beauty which, since he had last set eyes on her, had flowered. Her face had been still, almost dead, now it lived in roses that were flames, in stars warmer than those beginning to burn in the far sky. "Not go—why?" he asked, his fierce eyes taking what was his, his fiercer heart coming to its swift decision.

Her breath still caught a little. "Joe and Charl—they be going to lay wait for 'ee tonight."

For a moment the dark face grew sullen. "Wadn't doing no harm."

She hastened to explain. "They don't understand."

A swift change in face and voice. "You do."

His tone tore off the insincerities with which she had cloaked her act. A flame ran through her, a feeling of helplessness—the primitive shame. Those eyes, she could not bear the look in them. She must get away, yes, at all costs. Behind, along the road, lay safety and she must command her feet, must do it quickly or—it would be too late.

The gipsy put out a small brown hand and without knowing how it happened she found that she had lifted her face to his. For a breathing space she leaned on his breast, and while she leaned there, it was as if an old thing died and a new was born. The dead fell away into its place and the dark covered it, but the new—

"Come—" the gipsy said, those intolerable eyes on hers; but, from below, from the deeps of her nature, came the cry of the settled people. "You are of us,

you cannot go. His people are the wild people, we are the house and farm people. You must stay with us."

The gipsy fitted the pieces of his flute together. "Oh no," she begged in sudden fear, "I could not bear it."

The voices from those abysmal deeps grew every moment more insistent. "The roof over your head, the food on the linhay shelf, the fire by the hearth. Turn and go home."

He began to play and with the first notes Edith knew that she could no longer take the path that led to things familiar. Home—it was where they two should lie down to sleep, in a dry ditch or under a bit of rain-proof canvas. Fire—he had lighted a fire in her heart which meant that he only, of all men, might fill her arms.

He had turned into the Bodmin road, the road that led over the hills into the world.

She was trembling violently, but she had yielded to the clasp of an arm, the pressure of lips, had answered with a rising surge of emotion—and none may stay the tides of the sea!

She took one step—it was the music in her feet.

A step and then another step.

The gipsy put out his hand and together they walked towards the new day.

AN ATTEMPT AT MURDER

By Karel Capek

(*Translated by Paul Selver*)

THAT evening Mr. Tomsa, a higher civil servant, was relishing his ear-phones and with a bland smile listening in on the wireless to a pleasant rendering of Dvorák's dances. "That's something like a tune," he had said to himself con-

tentedly—when of a sudden there were a couple of loud reports from outside and glass was scattered with a crash from the window above his head. (The room in which Mr. Tomsa was sitting lay on the ground-floor.)

Then he did what any of us would do: first he waited for a moment to see what would happen next, then, and not till then, he took fright, for he perceived that somebody had fired twice at him through the window by which he was sitting. Opposite to him in the doorway, a splinter had been ripped away, and beneath it a bullet was embedded. His first impulse was to rush into the street and with his bare hands seize the ruffian by the collar. But when a man is getting on in years and has a certain dignity to maintain, he generally gives a first impulse the miss and decides in favour of the second. That is why Mr. Tomsa made a dash for the telephone and rang up the police.

"Hallo!" he shouted. "Send someone here at once. An attempt has just been made to murder me."

"Where is it?" said a sleepy and listless voice.

"Here, in my flat." Mr. Tomsa flared up in sudden anger, as if police could have prevented it. "It's perfectly outrageous to start shooting like this, for no reason at all, at a law-abiding citizen who's sitting quietly at home. This has got to be looked into very strictly. It's a fine state of affairs when—"

"All right," interrupted the sleepy voice. "I'll send someone to you."

Mr. Tomsa fumed with impatience. It seemed to him an eternity before this someone made his appearance, but in reality only twenty minutes elapsed before a stolid police inspector reached him and was examining with interest the window through which the shots had passed.

"Someone's been shooting here, sir," he said soberly.

"I could have told you that," burst forth Mr. Tomsa. "Why, I was sitting here by the window."

"Seven millimetres calibre," announced the inspector, extracting the bullet from the door by means of a knife. "Looks as if it's been fired from an old army revolver. Just look here. The chap, whoever he was, must have been standing on the fence. If he'd been standing on the pavement the bullet would have gone in higher up. That means he must have been aiming at you, sir."

"That's funny," observed Mr. Tomsa, bitterly. "I almost thought he was trying to hit the door."

"And who did it?" asked the inspector, ignoring this interruption.

"I'm sorry I can't give you his address," said Mr. Tomsa. " I didn't see the gentleman and I forgot to ask him in."

"That makes things difficult," rejoined the inspector placidly. "And whom do you suspect?"

Mr. Tomsa's supply of patience gave out.

"Suspect?" he began irritably. "Man alive, I never saw the blackguard, and even if he'd been good enough to wait till I had blown a kiss to him through the window I couldn't have recognized him in the darkness. My dear sir, if I knew who it was do you think I'd have bothered you to come here?"

"Well, yes, there's something in that, sir," replied the inspector, soothingly. "But perhaps you can think of somebody who'd profit by your death, or who might want to pay you out for something. . . . You see, sir, this wasn't no attempted burglary; a burglar don't shoot unless he has to. But there may be somebody who's got a grudge against you. That's for you to say, sir, and then we'll look into it."

Mr. Tomsa was taken aback. He hadn't thought of it in that light.

"I haven't the faintest idea," he said waveringly and cast a glance over the peaceful life he had led as a civil servant and a bachelor. "As far as I know, I haven't an enemy in the world, most positively I haven't. The thing's quite impossible," he added, shaking his head. "Why, I never fall out with anyone; I keep entirely to myself. I never go anywhere; I never poke my nose into anything. What should anyone want to pay me out for?"

The inspector shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know, sir. But perhaps you'll think of something by tomorrow. You won't be nervous here by yourself?"

"No," said Mr. Tomsa in a reflective tone. "It's queer," he said to himself uneasily when he was alone, "why anybody should shoot at me—at me of all people. Why, I'm almost a recluse. I attend to my work in the office and I go home—why, I scarcely ever come into contact with anyone. Why should they want to shoot at me, then?" he said, wondering with increasing bitterness at such ungracious behaviour. Little by little he began to pity himself. "Here I've been slaving away like a horse," he said to himself, "even taking work home with me, never extravagant, never giving myself a treat, living like a snail in its shell, and, bang! someone comes along to put a bullet in me. My goodness, it's queer how fiendish people are," marvelled Mr. Tomsa aghast. "What have I ever done to anyone? Why should anyone have such a shocking, such an insane hatred for me?"

As he sat on the bed, holding the boot he had taken off, he tried to reassure himself. "Perhaps there's some mistake. The man must have taken me for someone else, someone against whom he had a grudge. That must be it," he said to himself with relief, "because why, why should anyone hate me like that?"

The boot fell from Mr. Tomsa's hand. "Well, of course," he suddenly reminded himself with a slight sense of embarrassment, "that was a silly thing to do, but it was really nothing more than a slip of the tongue. I was talking to Roubal, and without meaning to, I made a nasty remark about his wife. Of course, everyone knows the minx carries on with Tom, Dick and Harry, and he knows it, too, but he doesn't want to let people see he does. And I, ass that I was, stupidly blurted it out. . . ."

Mr. Tomsa remembered that Roubal had merely gulped and dug his nails into his clenched hands. "Good heavens!" he said to himself, horrified, "the man was cut to the quick. Why, he must be madly in love with her. Of course, I tried to smooth matters over, but, my word, didn't he bite his lips! There's no doubt he has good reason for hating me," reflected Mr. Tomsa, gloomily. "I know he didn't shoot at me —that's nonsense, but I really couldn't be surprised if—"

Mr. Tomsa stared at the floor abashed. "Or what about that tailor?" he reminded himself very constrainedly. "For fifteen years I used to order my clothes from him, and then one day I was told he was in the last stage of consumption. Of course, a man fights shy of wearing clothes that a consumptive tailor has been coughing into, so I stopped getting my suits from him. And then he came and begged and prayed of me, saying that he hadn't got a stitch of work to do, that his wife was ill, and that he wanted to send his children away. Would I let him have my custom again? Good heavens! the poor fellow looked as pale as a ghost, and from the way he sweated I could see how ill he was.

" 'Mr. Kolinsky,' I said to him, 'look here, it's no

use. I need a better tailor; you haven't given me satisfaction.'

"'I'll try my hardest, sir,' he stammered, sweating with fright and shame; it's a wonder he didn't burst out crying. And I," Mr. Tomsa reminded himself, "I just sent him away, saying 'I'll see,' the sort of remark that poor devils like that know only too well. There's a man who might hate me," said Tomsa to himself in alarm; "it must be an awful thing to go and beg and pray of someone for your very life, and to be sent away so unfeelingly. But what was I to do with him? I know he couldn't have done it, but—"

Mr. Tomsa began to feel more and more downhearted. "That was another unpleasant business," he reminded himself, "the way I gave our office janitor a wigging. There was a file I couldn't find, so I sent for the old fellow and called him names as if he'd been a school-boy—in front of other people, too. 'This is what you call keeping things in order, I suppose, you idiot; you make the whole place look like a pig-sty. I ought to give you the sack.' And then I found the file in my own drawer. And the poor old chap never murmured; he just trembled and blinked his eyes."

A surge of heat caused Mr. Tomsa to wince. "A man can't very well apologize to his subordinate," he said to himself peevishly, "even if he has been a little hard on him. But how these subordinates must hate their superiors. Wait a bit; I'll give the old fellow some cast-off clothes; but perhaps that would be too humiliating for him, too."

Mr. Tomsa now found it unbearable to continue lying in bed, the counterpane was stifling him. He sat on the bed with his arms round his knees and stared into darkness. "Then there was that affair with young Moravek in the office," he reflected with a pang. "He's a well educated fellow and writes poems. And when

he made a blunder in dealing with those papers I said to him 'Do it all over again, young man,' and I meant to throw the papers onto the table, but they fell under his feet, and when he bent to pick them up he was quite red, his eyes were red. I could have kicked myself," growled Mr. Tomsa. "Why, I'm quite fond of the young fellow, and then to go and humiliate him like that, even without intending to!"

Another face floated into Mr. Tomsa's mind, the pale and hollow face of his colleague, Wankl. "Poor Wankl," he said to himself, "he wanted to be clerk-in-charge, and I was appointed instead. It would have meant a few hundred crowns more every year, and he's got six children. I heard that he wanted to have his eldest daughter trained as a singer, but he can't afford it and I was promoted over his head because he's such a slow-witted duffer and a drudge. His wife's bad-tempered and terribly skinny, through having to be always pinching and scraping; he swallows a dry roll for his midday lunch." Mr. Tomsa lapsed into dismal thoughts. "Poor Wankl, he must feel terribly down in the mouth when he sees me without any family getting a bigger salary than he has; but how can I help it? I always feel rather uncomfortable when he looks at me in that surly and reproachful way of his."

Mr. Tomsa rubbed his forehead on which the sweat of anguish had broken out. "Yes," he said to himself, "and then there was a waiter who did me out of a few crowns; and I called up the proprietor and he dismissed the waiter on the spot. 'You thief,' he snarled at him, 'I'll see that nobody in Prague gives you a job.' The man never said a word—just went away; I could see his shoulder-blades sticking out under his jacket."

Mr. Tomsa sat down by his wireless set and put on the head-phones; but the wireless set was silent amid the silent night, the silent hours of the night; and Mr.

Tomsa covered his face with his hands and recalled all the people he had ever met, the queer and paltry people who had meant nothing to him and of whom he had never since thought.

In the morning he called at the police-station; he was rather pale and ill at ease. "Well, sir," asked the police inspector, "have you thought of anyone who's likely to have a grudge against you?"

Mr. Tomsa shook his head, "I don't know," he said hesitantly. "You see, there's so many who are likely to have a grudge against me that—" He made a helpless gesture with his hand. "The fact of the matter is you never can tell how many people you may have done harm to. You know, I'm not going to sit by that window any more. And I've come to ask you to let the whole matter slide."

HEAT

By John Galsworthy

I

THE Misses Gannaway—Frances and Lavinia—had lived five years at Villa Serena, Mentone, before they were obliged to have Dr. Drouart to their little maid Assunta. They awaited his verdict, on the loggia, with the sun trying to reach them through green blinds and the Banksia roses.

Miss Frances, tall, irregular, with silver-threaded dark hair, sprawled rather than sat, playing with her Lupol pup, and her beautiful brown eyes, one of which drooped in a queer way, brooded quizzically over Miss Lavinia, small, compact, with deep grey eyes—a sort of spiritual pocket Hercules. Miss Frances was forty-eight, Miss Lavinia forty-seven—the half-Irish daugh-

ters of the late Archdeacon Gannaway, economising their just-sufficient income in France, fond of each other with that sisterly affection which sees the worst; kind to animals; addicted to duets on piano and violin —in character very different, except for a tendency towards the extreme. The little maid Assunta, from over the border in Italy, because they were more pious and simple, according to Miss Lavinia, was a dark, sweet-smiling little thing, pretty, and without benefit of dressmaker neat-figured, until—it had seemed necessary to have in Dr. Drouart. Already three pitched battles had been fought over her between the sisters; for Miss Frances had said, "These things will happen, Lavvy!" and Miss Lavinia, "That's the philosophy of perdition, Frank." Storms, indeed, took place between them periodically, Miss Lavinia having religion, and Miss Frances none. The little chapel which Miss Lavinia had improvised out of a summer house in the garden, used by the last tenant for his midday *siesta,* was never entered by Miss Frances. At one end of it was a Madonna (of *faïence,* after Luca della Robbia), at the other a wooden crucifixion (of Tirolese workmanship); a tiny altar with candles stood in front of each, and a censer was suspended from the ceiling above a porcelain bowl. Miss Lavinia was not Roman Catholic, but she was much "higher" than anything Protestant in Mentone, and supplied her own religious wants rather than chafe under the shortcomings of a minister too untemperamental. Fully half the time spent in her little chapel she gave to supplications on behalf of Frances, who would be reading a novel, smoking her cigarette, or lying on her bed dozing off the fumes of——! The soul of Frances was Miss Lavinia's greatest burden. And now to that burden was added the soul of Assunta; and Frances could not see it.

They sat without speaking, Miss Lavinia crisping her hands, Miss Frances rolling her eyes from the puppy to her sister. The clock ticked, there was the lemony scent of June. As a rule they left for Switzerland in May, but this year—Assunta!

The Lupol puppy yapped; Miss Frances smothered its nose, Miss Lavinia raised her eyes, which ever went directly to the point. They encountered those of Dr. Drouart, dark brown and heavy-lidded above the folds in his cheeks, and closely clipped pointed beard, and lips quivering ironically.

"Well, Dr. Drouart?"

The doctor shrugged. "What need of words?" he seemed to say.

Miss Frances muttered something into the puppy's fawn-coloured fur; Dr. Drouart addressed himself to her.

"In three months," he said. "She is very young—that could go wrong."

"Who is the man?" asked Miss Lavinia sharply.

"There is no man, it seems!"

"Dr. Drouart!"

"Perhaps she will confess to you, ladies; to me—not a word."

"She *must,*" said Lavinia.

"Why, Lavvy?" said Miss Frances.

"She will have to marry him, of course. But I know—I know it's the baker."

"She will make a pretty little mother," said Dr. Drouart.

"Delightful," murmured Miss Frances; and squeezed the puppy to her chest.

"I have given her explanations," said Dr. Drouart. "There is nothing to be done but wait. She may continue her work; no severe exercise; a quiet mind."

Miss Lavinia rose.

"Disgraceful!" she said. "Good morning, Dr. Drouart."

The doctor bowed, wreathing his cynicism in a sort of deference. When he was gone Miss Frances said:

"Don't be a pig, Lavvy!"

"If they *will* wear ear-rings!" cried Miss Lavinia, and swept out into the heat.

"She's gone to pray!" thought Miss Frances, rubbing her face against the puppy till it bit her nose with its pins of teeth.

§

The little maid Assunta, in her flowered cotton overall, stood by the pantry tap, where the doctor had left her. Her gold ear-rings hung motionless, her velvety eyes were cast down, her finger continued the droop of her lower lip; her small, round face was pale. She let the water trickle on the teaspoons, and did not think. Miss Frances stood and looked at her.

"Well, Assunta," she said; "you *have* done it!" Assunta turned, and her ear-rings quivered.

"There!" said Miss Frances in her untidy French, "don't look like that—the milk's spilled. Cheer up!"

Assunta smiled. The change was as the opening of a flower, the inside of whose petals is like dark velvet.

"I don't wonder!" muttered Miss Frances to herself in English; "she oughtn't to have that smile. Naughty little thing! And here we shall be—stuck all the summer in this heat!" Assunta's smile faded. Miss Frances rubbed her bitten nose.

"Who was it?" she said.

Assunta did not answer. Oh, the natural little wretch! She didn't mind what she had done, didn't mind having a baby—only minded being scolded!

"All right, Assunta! Don't tell us if you don't want to!"

§

At her *prie-dieu* before the Madonna in the summer-house Miss Lavinia knelt and mourned for Assunta. A bee had entered with her and droned sleepily round, buzzing against the stained glass behind the Madonna, against the olive wood of the walls and roof. Though the sun could not get in, it was very hot, and Miss Lavinia's forehead was lightly pearled with sweat; she envied the cool blue and white Madonna, who felt no heat. Frances had a devil—to take this thing so lightly! Frances should have been kneeling here, too, perspiring for that little lost girl! And she prayed long, fervently for Frances, her eyes fixed on the Madonna's hands, emerging white from their blue sleeves, with fingers tip-touched, uplifted, slender—they, too, were praying, but they were cool, so cool! And Miss Lavinia prayed for coolness, for purity in the heat; while the energy within her throbbed. She rose from the *prie-dieu,* and, slipping off her shoes and stockings, stood bare-foot on the tiles, uplifting her hands like the Madonna—the tiles were cool, the blood no longer throbbed in her hands; it was like shedding the sinful impulses of womanhood. She became conscious of the bee—its buzzing was as the voice of the noonday heat, of the fervour that betrayed—that had betrayed Assunta. The cool—cool of the blue, of heaven above—beyond the bee, beyond Assunta and the baker, beyond all sin and fancy and fires that burn within! The bee buzzed, the air in the little summer house seemed to simmer. She put on her stockings and shoes and went out. A heavy, burning perfume clung in the air, from pepper-trees, geraniums, acacias, daphne. Hot—how hot! Among the bougainvillea

and the Banksia roses on the loggia, Frances was still playing with the Lupol pup.

"Well, Lavvy?"

"She must be made to feel her sin. That baker man won't marry her unless we threaten him."

"It's her affair; and if she chooses not——"

Miss Lavinia flushed. "Frank, I am obliged to say that I think it all comes from you. Don't laugh! Your laxity, the books you read, the things you say, your never going to church, the way you——"

Miss Frances' face grew crimson, too. "Well?" she said.

Miss Lavinia clasped her hands together.

"Well?" said Miss Frances again.

"Brandy!"

Miss Frances dropped the puppy, and stood up.

"Holy woman!" she said.

For a short eternity the two sisters stood looking at each other breathlessly; then Miss Frances turned away. She went upstairs and flung herself on her bed. So! It had come—the moment round which they had skirted a hundred times, because they were attached to each other, in their different fashions. Frances drank because Lavinia was too holy; Lavinia was too holy because Frances drank! Was that it?—or was the reason deeper? Tossing on her bed, Miss Frances brooded. Her spirit, loosely hung, wide-ranging, condemned herself the while excusing, excused her sister while condemning. Secret drinking! For a lady! Shameful! Only, one felt—felt such a want of soothing, of dulling; such a craving for the pleasant sense that nothing mattered, not even the having missed—missed——! Why had she sent her lover away—all those years ago? A hot quarrel—Pride! Her pride and his! And then, after, always that gnawing sense that she had missed her proper mate, so that no other—no other would do!

It was enough to make one drink. Yes! And Lavvy was so holy, so self-righteous, with her perpetual praying and her condemnations; poor Lavvy, so intense, such energy! She rolled off her bed and unlocked a cupboard. Three empty bottles—one half full; she took it out. Pour it away, renounce her weakness! She drew out the cork; her nostrils sniffed, and the heat in her heart raged at the smell. She took a glass, poured out a dram, swallowed it, and put the bottle back. Since Lavvy knew—what did it matter now? Why give up that which soothed, when she had let Life pass her by, leaving her unexpressing, unexpressed, like a milestone on a road. And in this heat—that little wretch Assunta, keeping them here! Assunta! To Miss Frances, Assunta seemed suddenly fortunate, not left aside by Life, not a bare milestone on the road.

§

Miss Lavinia stayed gazing at her sister's empty chair. At last the root of the trouble was laid open. Now she could save Frances from herself; now there was no secret barrier! She felt a sort of sacred fire within her, as if the heat were all collected in her heart. The puppy whined against her skirt; she took it up. Not hers—but a baby thing! She cuddled it against her chest. That child Assunta—sixteen—barely sixteen! Men! How disgusting they were! All her life she had repulsed them—so fleshly, so gross! She remembered with a sort of fierce satisfaction at that moment the half-broken hearts of more than one who had wanted her to be his wife. The puppy yapped. There behind her stood Assunta to lay the cloth for lunch. Round and youthful, soft between those gold ear-rings, the child's face seemed at once to challenge and reproach her.

"Come here! You must tell us his name, Assunta." Ah! drooping her lip—sulky!

"Your Madonna will not plead for you if you don't do your best to make amends. I order you to tell me."

Assunta shook her head. The sweat broke out again on Miss Lavinia's forehead; she put her hands on the child's shoulders. She was no taller, but the energy in her light figure was terrific. She would shake and shake until——! Assunta raised her eyes.

"Miss Frances say no," she said.

The ear-rings quivered from a convulsive shake.

"Go away!" cried Miss Lavinia, "before I——"

And, clutching her wet forehead, she stood gazing fiercely into the heat.

II

That summer was hot, even for Mentone. Miss Frances and Miss Lavinia suffered. A malevolent trick of Providence, indeed, with this domestic trouble on their hands! The house had hardly felt the breath of sea-coolness in the small hours, before the sun came up over Bellenda, saturating walls, tiles, trees, and shrubs. Miss Lavinia's chapel was like a furnace. Miss Frances would lie in her thin nightgown writhing; Miss Lavinia leaned out of her bedroom window for hours together. A woman came to do Assunta's work, and in the middle of August, hottest week of the year, the baby was born, a fortnight before its time. The Misses Gannaway, tamed by the unaccustomed, were sweet to her, devoted to the baby. They looked at each other askance, did not trust each other to handle it. There was dark down on its tiny head, it had black eyes, and was a boy. Miss Frances did not drink, Miss Lavinia did not pray. For ten days the baby flourished; then seemed to wilt and droop. Assunta lay looking at it, soft and acquiescent. The

Misses Gannaway resented that look on her face, so much of a piece with her original sin. Assunta's married sister came, from the mountain village over the frontier, bringing a bunch of autumn crocuses—*"Mani di Madonna,"* she called them—cool, tapering, thin mauve blossoms, whose six petals, veined, crystalline, well-nigh transparent, clustered upwards around saffron hearts. Miss Lavinia placed them in the bowl before the Madonna in her chapel. Assunta's sister said the baby would die; Assunta was too young, in this heat down here! When she had gone the Misses Gannaway sat in the little bedroom silent, avoiding each other's eyes, furtively regarding the baby and its mother. That night Miss Frances went to her cupboard three times; Miss Lavinia spent two hours kneeling at her *prie-dieu.* Next day—hottest day of the year, by Dr. Drouart's un-English thermometer—wet sheets were suspended in front of Assunta's window; and outside her door Miss Frances sprawled, pulling the string of an extemporised punkah. At noon Miss Lavinia came up, passed her sister, and went in. A quarter of an hour later she came out with a deep furrow between her brows, and on her face the look which Miss Frances could not bear.

"Frank, suppose the baby dies——! It must be baptised at once."

Miss Frances ceased to pull the punkah string. "Rats, Lavvy!"

"Heathen, blasphemous! But for your ways of going on—it would never have been born. It shan't be lost because of you—I can tell you that."

"You'll kill it with your nonsense!" whispered Miss Frances. "Leave it alone, can't you?"

Miss Lavinia turned to go back into the bedroom; Miss Frances rose and barred the way. In a moment they were struggling together in the heat, violently,

desperately, swaying and clutching, with little gasps, as if they had been children again in the schoolroom or the nursery. The baby's voice rose from within, plaintive. Miss Frances let go suddenly and fell back against the passage wall. She stood a moment, panting, dishevelled, ashamed; then, clutching her forehead, fled silently. Miss Lavinia smoothed her hair and went back into the room.

§

Dr. Drouart, in his white suit, under his green-lined umbrella, received no answer to his ring; going round into the garden, he entered by the loggia. Nobody—anywhere! Laying down his umbrella in the hall, he mounted to Assunta's room. She was lying there alone, her eyes wide open, her lip drooping.

"Où est bébé?"

"Mademoiselle!"

"Hein!" said Dr. Drouart. *"Tranquille, mon enfant, tranquille!"*

A door was flung open as he passed, and Miss Frances stood swaying.

"The baby?" said Dr. Drouart. "What is this, Mees Frances?"

"In her chapel—baptising!"

Dr. Drouart moved towards her; Miss Frances recoiled.

"Don't come near me—I'm not——"

Dr. Drouart's nostrils twitched—a smell of brandy! Her eyes rolled wildly; she shut the door in his face. Dr. Drouart stood looking at it; then, with a grimace, he went down into the garden.

Burning heat, grasshoppers churring, puffs of hot wind from the south rousing a dry rattling from the scorched palm leaves—the very air smelled parched. Dr. Drouart crossed over to the summer house. Rais-

ing himself on tiptoe, he tried to see through the stained glass, but all was blurred yellow; and very softly he opened the door. Baptism was over. Miss Lavinia had used the water from the bowl of flowers, and the *"Mani di Madonna"* were strewn around her kneeling figure. Behind her, the baby, forgotten in the fervour of her prayer, lay in its white shawl on the altar before the Virgin with the raised hands. Drops glistened still on its tiny, wax-white face. Dr. Drouart put his finger to its lips, his ear to its heart. Its little clock had stopped. He stood a moment, making sure, then spun round towards that kneeling figure, his face again distorted in the pained grimace of one who sees deformity.

MISS JEDBURYS

By Frank Swinnerton

I

STRICT grammarians would call them the Misses Jedbury, but they are known in the village as Miss Jedburys. They always have been Miss Harriet and Miss Nelly, and they remain Miss Harriet and Miss Nelly. Nobody in the village now knows whether any attempt was ever made to persuade either to become anybody else. There may have been romances, hints, fears, bitter disappointments for Miss Jedburys, but if so these are long forgotten, and the sisters have been all their lives single in Marshmeadow, and look as though they would die there, still Miss Jedburys. They live upon the fringe of the village, in a cottage which was once two cottages. It is red-tiled and weather-boarded, and the boards are painted a sort of putty grey colour, which is now rather faded. The cottage lies a long way back from the road, and each

half of it is like a reflection of the other half. In front of it is a long, wide garden, without flowers, filled with rows and rows of vegetables set across its width, and interrupted here and there by gnarled old fruit trees. A plain wooden paling, also painted grey to match the cottages, separates the garden from the village street, and a straight, brick-paved pathway runs from the two front doors of the cottage, which are generally open, down to a small gate in the paling. The cottage has four rooms, two twins upstairs and two down, and behind it are two very tiny sculleries, still divided, although a single glass roof, with its panes whitewashed, covers both and shelters them alike from the sun and rain. Behind all this, apart from some sheds, are two or three acres which are used as pasture.

Miss Jedburys were not born in this cottage. They were born fifty years ago, and more, in a cottage that no longer exists. It fell down some years ago, after it had been condemned by the inspectors of rural dwellings. Its ruins have been thriftily used for other purposes. Its site is still known as "Ole Tom Jedbury's." Tom Jedbury was the father of Miss Jedburys, and both he and his wife are buried and half forgotten. Old Tom Jedbury was a builder. He bought land outside the village, and built several houses in the neighbourhood; but he never lived in a house of his own building, because he was thrifty: sold at a profit when prices were high, and bought at a profit when prices were low. That is why at his death Miss Jedburys were able to live in their charming red-tiled cottage with the grey weather-boarding, and eat the vegetables which grew in their own garden, and draw rents from others which made them wealthy upon a hundred pounds a year. Miss Jedburys were respected. They were not gentry, but they were independent. They em-

ployed a man to do the rough work of the garden and a woman to do the rough work of the house. Otherwise they did everything for themselves, sat in black silk on Sunday afternoons, and were able to save in a year nearly as much as they spent.

It is a curious thing that Miss Harriet closely resembled her father, and Miss Nelly her mother, not only in feature, but in character. The facts were well known in the village, where Miss Nelly was much liked and Miss Harriet slightly feared. Old Tom Jedbury had been a sturdy fellow with broad shoulders, a dusty coat, a cocked hat, and a brass watch-chain. He had stood with his feet apart, and he had talked (when he spoke at all, which was not often) in a thick peremptory voice, raising a short plump forefinger to emphasize his remarks. Mrs. Jedbury, upon the other hand, had been a quiet, determined little woman, whose tongue was active only when she was exasperated. Otherwise she was placid, brisk, and a good housewife. Not very many people had ever seen a quarrel between Mr. and Mrs. Jedbury. At any disagreement Mr. Jedbury cleared his throat and raised his forefinger, and then cleared his throat again and allowed his nose and face to twitch. But he did not use his thick peremptory voice. He kept that for his labourers or for the people who fell behind with their rent. His silence in face of his wife was therefore full of interest for the villagers. With raised brows and significant glances, they waited until later before commenting upon the subject of the disagreement. It seemed to them that Mr. Jedbury at one time had received some sort of melancholy rebuff, and that he remembered the rebuff very well for the remainder of his life. This, of course, was all long ago when Old Tom Jedbury and his wife were still alive. They had been dead very nearly fifteen years. Miss Harriet closely resembled

her father, and Miss Nelly her mother, not only in feature, but in character.

II

Both Miss Jedburys could cook, but Miss Nelly as a rule prepared the meals. Miss Harriet, who was a year older than Miss Nelly, worked in the garden and kept the house clean and tidy. She thus had the supervision of George, the garden help, and Mrs. Wright, who helped in the house. She was fierce with them. With Miss Nelly she was not fierce, although she frowned at her, and shot little glances from under her dark brows. Miss Harriet was thin, rather tall, very neat in her dress. Her face was grey, her eyes black, and her mouth went down at the corners. In each of her cheeks was a long crease. Her hands were long and bony, and she sometimes wore a small dark red shawl across her shoulders because she felt the cold. She looked something like a witch with tidy hair, and held herself very erect. Miss Nelly, on the other hand, was plumper, not quite so tall, and had very grey eyes which were somehow like those of a cat. It may have been that broad cheek bones and snubbly nose gave Miss Nelly that appearance. Her hair was a soft mouse-brown, and she had a little smile for everybody. Nevertheless, in spite of this smile, Miss Nelly was never cheated. No milkman or baker or draper would have thought of giving her short measure or short weight. There is that in some human beings which keeps those who deal with them quite honest. Miss Nelly had it. Whereas George resumed his work with a scowl after reproof from Miss Harriet, and soon forgot his trouble, he always kept half an eye warily upon Miss Nelly when she walked in the garden. Just so does the chicken feel anxiety at the neighbourhood of a hawk. As for Mrs. Wright, she adored both Miss

Jedburys. She said in the village that you couldn't ask to work for a nicer pair of women in all England. She felt equally at ease with either of them, and for Mrs. Wright the fierceness of Miss Harriet and the quiet mildness of Miss Nelly were alike tolerable, and even occasion for hearty liking. The reason she and George did not see eye to eye about Miss Jedburys was that George was a man and Mrs. Wright was a woman. Men are always nervous of women of any character. They believe them to have eyes in the backs of their heads, and a mysterious knowledge of all things, such as pipes thrust burning into trousers pockets and small packages taken away at the close of the afternoon. . . .

III

One morning a remarkable thing happened to Miss Jedburys. They received a letter with the London postmark. Now Wilson, the village postman, knew all the handwritings in the world (the world, that is, of Marshmeadow), and when he saw the envelope for Miss Jedburys that morning he scratched his head in bewilderment. For the handwriting was unknown to him. More, it was unlike any handwriting that he remembered to have seen in the village during all his thirty years of service. If the letter had been a postcard he would have mastered the mystery at once, but it was a letter, which revealed no secrets even after a dozen turns and dexterous pressures. So Wilson was forced to knock at Miss Jedburys' door, and, as neither Miss Harriet nor Miss Nelly was in the house, to leave the letter upon the sitting-room table without learning its contents. The secret of these for the present was to lie with Miss Jedburys. They read the letter together. It said:

Dear Harriet and Nelly,—I hope you are both well. I am well, but in great trouble, dear Harriet and Nelly,

for Geraldine and Poppy are both ill with the scarlet fever, and I am afraid for my little Jimmy. He has been away and has not caught it, but his granny—Harry's mother—is an old woman over seventy, and he is asking to come home as he is not happy there. He has nothing to do but to sit in her two rooms; no garden or other children or anything to amuse the poor dear. Dear Harriet and Nelly, for the sake of old times I am wondering if it is asking you too much to ask you to take care of him till I get the two others quite well. There is no risk, I assure you. He has been with his granny from the first and is a good boy, and I shall disinfect this letter before I send it. But if you could help me I should never forget it. Do please help me.

Your affectionate cousin,

EMILY DANVERS.

Miss Jedburys read the whole of this letter through, and Miss Harriet, laying it upon the window-ledge, instinctively wiped her hand upon her skirt and then dusted the skirt freely with the same hand, so as to dislodge any clinging scarlet-fever germs. It had been Miss Harriet who had opened the letter, and who had been holding it until now.

"Well!" exclaimed Miss Nelly, breathlessly. "What sauce!" An added pink was in her cheeks. Her eyes sparkled.

"What impudence!" added Miss Harriet, in a very serious voice. "Emmy always had it. Always—"

There was a long pause. Miss Harriet cleared her throat and folded her arms grimly. It was clear that she had been surprised, and that she felt indignant—enough to remain indignant for the whole morning, if need be. Her mouth turned down still more at the corners. The creases in her grey cheeks were very pronounced. She seemed immovable. Her very immovability exasperated her sister.

"Yes, but what we goin' to *do?*" asked Miss Nelly.

"See, he can't be more'n five or six, I shouldn't think. . . . Child like that. . . . He can't, not if. . . . How long's she been married? Fifteen years? I know there's four years' difference."

"Must be." Miss Harriet spoke in a resolute groan.

"Well, but what we goin' to *do?*" again asked Miss Nelly. "The child can't go back there, that's certain."

"She never ought to of had him." Miss Harriet was fixed in her pessimism. She referred, not to Jimmy, but to Jimmy's father. Miss Nelly objected.

"Oh, don't be silly. Good enough for *her,* I always said. Great stuck-up thing, she was. I wonder what the child's like. . . ."

"Like her," groaned Miss Harriet, wiping her fingers again upon her skirt. "We don't want him here."

"Going off with him like that, of course she's had a bad time."

"Serve her right," gruffly said Miss Harriet.

"Still, she is a cousin. . . . I think he'd better have a little bed in your room. See, mine's got the wardrobe and that. I expect Mrs. Beals would lend that little bed."

"In my . . . !"

Miss Harriet spoke in a thick, peremptory voice, raising a long, bony forefinger as if to emphasize the refusal she was about to give. Then she cleared her throat and half-turned away. Her nose and face twitched slightly.

IV

Jimmy came under the guard's care. He had been put into the train in London by his father, and a lady had promised to look after him until she left the carriage at Revelstone Junction. And at that point she gave him to the guard, and Jimmy sat on a little wooden box in the guard's van for the remainder of

the journey, watching silently a young man who returned the stare from under his smart peaked cap, or whistled, or moved about looking at the parcels in his van; and Jimmy almost fell out of the train at each station, while the guard was away, and grew mysteriously dirtier with the passing of every mile. He was round-faced, and nearly six years old, and wore a large straw sailor's hat with elastic under his chin; but his face was rather white, and his pale blue eyes stared a little. He looked miserable and cowed, as if he were ready to cry. But he did not cry in the train, because he was staring at the guard. His basket of clothes for the visit was of the smallest. It was like a doll's basket. And by the time Marshmeadow was reached Jimmy was sleepy, and more homesick, and more frightened than ever; and when he was lifted out of the van by the guard and saw Miss Harriet waiting there for him on the platform, with severe eyes and two long creases in her cheeks, looking like a witch with tidy hair, Jimmy began to cry in earnest.

"Take me home!" he bellowed. "Take me home. Daddy, take me home!"

He stamped quickly with both feet, his mouth stretched wide open, and big tears rolling down his cheeks. And then, as Miss Harriet stooped down in terror, taking both his hands in hers, trying to comfort him, Jimmy twisted away, almost screaming. When she would have coaxed, wiping away his tears with a lavender-scented pocket-handkerchief, Jimmy sniffed the strange and delightful scent, and wriggled more stubbornly, and at last blurted out the truth. "Go away. I don't—don't *like* you," he sobbed. "You're ugly. I want to go home. Daddy!"

It was the most tragic moment in his young life. Perhaps, also, in Miss Harriet's life, but as to that we do not know. They were alone together upon the plat-

form, near the end of it, by the signal-box; and the train was gone, and the gleaming rails appeared to quiver in the heat. And the sky above was dazzling blue, and there were fresh green trees and brilliant summer flowers by the fence at the back of the platform, and the sweet smell of the country penetrated everything. But Jimmy saw none of these beauties—he saw only an old thin woman with severe eyes and two long creases in her cheeks, looking like a witch with tidy hair, and smelling faintly of camphor, like a preserved moth. He screamed again, in terror at the thought that Miss Harriet was stealing him away from daddy and mummy, completely unmanageable. It was painful. The poor woman was full of sorrow at his state, at her own helplessness. She looked even more fiercely at Jimmy, with the fierceness of gruff desperation. Fortunately for Miss Harriet, Mr. Rawlings, the station-master, a man with very red cheeks and merry eyes, and rough, horny hands, came to her aid. He had seven children of his own, and knew how to manage little frightened boys.

"Here, here, here!" he cried, reassuringly to Jimmy. "What's all this about, hey?" And he chucked the little boy under the chin. To Miss Harriet he said: "Get him some sweets, Miss Harriet. That's what he wants. That'll quiet him. The poor lad's weary, that's what's the matter with him."

"I will. Of course I will," said Miss Harriet starting to her feet, feeling for a purse and finding none.

"Here, wait a bit. . . . Wait a bit. You stop where you are, Miss Harriet." And with that Mr. Rawlings went to a penny-in-the-slot machine, and brought back a piece of butter-scotch, which he tore from its carton as he walked. "Come along; try that, old man," he said. "That's better, ain't it?"

There was a moment's pause—of doubt, of fear, of

instinctive recoil from persuasion. They all stood, as it were, on tiptoe, contemplating failure. Then Jimmy, half-sobbing still, and hic-cupping from hunger and tears, took the sweet and brought it almost reluctantly to his mouth. Miss Harriet watched him sucking it. She stooped again, until her face was on a level with Jimmy's face.

"Are you all right now?" she asked in her gruff voice.

Jimmy nodded. He looked into the eyes so near his own. They were not so very fierce. Not so fierce, at any rate, as he had thought. He let her take his basket and his disengaged hand, grimy with travel. Together they left the station and went out into the village street, where other little boys and girls, released from school, were running and playing, or in clusters straggling home to tea.

V

Within a week Jimmy had lost all fear of Marshmeadow. He was on friendly terms with George, who found him odd raspberries and loganberries and currants among the canes and bushes farthest from Miss Nelly's eye, and wiped his mouth roughly with a dirty handkerchief in case Miss Nelly should observe the betraying fruit stains. He was talked to and petted by Mrs. Wright, who brought him sweets in small paper bags from the village shop and ruffled his hair with a rasping hand. He ran and played in the garden (but not among the vegetables) and the pastures behind the cottage. And within doors he was always at home. Miss Nelly let him look at the photograph album, and showed him his granddad and grandma there, and Miss Harriet and herself when they were younger, and made little cakes and goodies for him, and saw that his digestion was not ruined. Miss Harriet helped him to

wash and dress, and tucked him up in bed at night, and let him play with the less dangerous things in her work-basket, and even, when they were quite alone, sang to him.

By the end of his first seven days at the cottage Jimmy's face was less white, his body healthily plump, and his heart full of high spirits. He was very friendly with Miss Nelly, would hide from her and jump out with a bawl, and would then scamper off laughing; or would, under her command and as if for a wager, sit without wriggling for five minutes. She, in return, would talk to him as from a height in an unnatural self-conscious voice, which showed how ill at ease she was with any child. She knew nothing of children. But as if Jimmy understood that, he was always attentive to her. He was on very good terms with Miss Nelly. Miss Harriet he adored. He would hug her at night and in the morning, pressing his little mouth to her cheek and snuggling his head under her chin. Miss Harriet blinked when he did this. Her nose and face twitched slightly.

She did not seem to Jimmy now to be ugly. All the frightening fierceness of her appearance caused him no fear at all. Sometimes with a finger he would even trace the lines of the creases on her cheeks, laughing softly to himself as he did so. That was when Jimmy was comfortably drowsy and was allowing himself to be babyish. And when he was up and dressed, when he was a man, he would run and shout from the garden, full of glee, to call Miss Harriet to see something he had found there, or to come instantly and watch a circus or heavy wagon passing through the village on its way to Revelstone.

"Aunt Harrie!" he would roar. "Come and look. Oh, *quick;* it's going!" And Harriet would sedately hurry to his side, and he would take her hand, and to-

gether they would watch the dragon-fly, or the disturbed beetle, or the passing caravans, entirely absorbed in the spectacle.

Upon such occasions Miss Nelly would watch them from a distance, either from the doorway of the cottage, or from one of the windows. And as she watched Miss Nelly's upper lip would slightly curl, as if at the sight of Miss Harriet making a fool of herself over Jimmy.

VI

One day Jimmy had an accident, and it was of much importance in this household. Miss Harriet was out, gone to the village, and he was playing by himself in the garden. He had been there for some time, busily pottering with stones and rubbish, and had become absorbed in his tasks. He had forgotten that Miss Harriet was out. And then suddenly came the catastrophe. George, trundling his old barrow round from one of the sheds at the back of the house, saw Jimmy run a few steps from his stones, turn and run back, hesitate, duck, his hands in the air, and finally, in flight, stumble. As he fell Jimmy gave a piercing shriek. He was up again in an instant, running to the house, screaming still, quite white with pain and terror. He had been stung by a wasp. Miss Nelly, sitting there by the window, who always knew what went on in the garden and knew the cure for every ache, threw down her work on the instant of Jimmy's first cry. She was in three flying steps across to the cupboard where soda was kept. There was excitement in her manner, her hands trembled, her breath came quickly. She was at the door by the time Jimmy, wildly sobbing, reached it.

"Why, what's the matter, little man?" cried Miss Nelly, in the unnatural, self-conscious voice which, in speaking to Jimmy, she always used. She pretended

not to have seen the whole affair. Her round pink face was flushed more deeply; her round grey eyes were soft. And then, at his hysterical cry: "Did a nasty wasp—"

Jimmy blindly tried to press past her, but Miss Nelly caught him by the hand that had been stung. He screamed again and struggled to be free. He struggled frantically, and Miss Nelly, forced to let his hand go, still intercepted, her eagerness alarming Jimmy the more. He was shivering and sobbing, wriggling out of her grasp, his eyes scared. Miss Nelly used her strength. She was unconscious, in her excitement, of the force she exerted. Her mouth was set, her sudden temper rising.

"No, no!" screamed Jimmy passionately. "No. Not you. Not you. Not you. I want Harrie. Harrie! Oh, where *are* you, Harrie!"

His voice was shrill with terror and distress. He had never been so frightened and in such agonizing pain.

"Here, my precious!" called Miss Harriet from just within the gate in the paling. She was running up the path, drawn by his screams. "I'm here. Harrie's coming!" She ran faster.

"Little *fool,* let me see to it!" cried Miss Nelly, seizing his arm ferociously. She was beside herself, had lost all control in sweeping vehemence.

"No!" Jimmy tore himself away, and in the action was flung, sobbing, into Miss Harriet's arms just as she reached the cottage doorway. He was gathered to her thin breast, close to that hungry witch's face with the long creases of sadness in it. There he was safe, was happy, against a heart that beat with love for him.

Miss Nelly stood breathless, her eyes glittering, her breast rising and falling fast. Her face, broad and

plump, as she looked at Miss Harriet tending the poor wounded hand of Jimmy, was deeply reddened. Her mouth was tightly closed, as if by force.

VII

Another three weeks passed, and Emily Danvers came to take Jimmy back to London. She was a woman much younger than Miss Harriet and Miss Nelly, but her face was so thin and anxious that she looked as old as they were. She carried herself without grace, but she was tall, and her eyes were very kind and full of understanding. She was neatly but not well dressed in a dark skirt and light blouse, with a plain dark straw hat; and when she saw Jimmy waiting for her at the flower-decked railway station, so well and strong, she almost cried with gratitude to Miss Jedburys. Across her mind shot memory of hard things said by herself to her husband of Miss Harriet and Miss Nelly as thrifty skinflint spinsters, and she was ashamed. Jimmy had hold of Miss Harriet's hand as the train stopped, and jumped about with excitement as his mother came into view.

"Mummy, mummy!" he cried, and was off like a swallow, gathered to her arms, and hugged and set down again talking and laughing. Miss Harriet could see him pointing at herself. "That's my Harrie," he was saying. "No, my *Harrie*."

Emmy came up, her face beaming and transfigured with sunshine and happiness. "You *have* been good to him," she said quite frankly, without "How d'you do?" or other greeting.

"H'm!" said Miss Harriet. And then, as both stood rather awkwardly silent: "I don't know what we shall do without him."

They went to the cottage which had been two cottages and had tea, and talked about the other children,

and how they were better, and how Mr. Danvers had a good situation. Miss Jedburys did not invite Geraldine and Poppy to come and stay with them, or offer to give Emmy any fruit for them or for herself. They sat quite primly in the sitting-room, listening to Emmy, and both looking out through the window into the sunny garden, where Jimmy was playing for the last time with George and by himself. And so an hour, two hours, went by. At length Emmy began to call to her boy to leave the garden, and George, and his last game. And she and he, with both Miss Jedburys, trudged along the street and in through the booking hall of the railway station, and across the line to the other platform. There they stood in the late afternoon sun, which was burning the flowers into stronger scent and momentarily more brilliant colouring, waiting for the train which was to leave Miss Jedburys all desolate, without the life of their home. And the little brown-faced Jimmy went from one to the other, strong and happy, sorry to be going, but not realizing that it was a real parting, because he thought he would often come back to Marshmeadow. As the train came in he suddenly turned and clung to Miss Harriet, and pressed his face to the long thin cheek as if he would never leave go. And even so did Miss Harriet cling to Jimmy.

"You'll come soon again," said Miss Harriet, as the train panted in.

"My Harrie!" said Jimmy.

"Good-bye, Jimmy," said Miss Nelly, standing quite still and watching them.

"Bye," said Jimmy, and turned quickly from Miss Nelly's kiss. "Goo'bye, my Harrie!"

The two sisters remained standing upon the platform until the train was nearly out of sight. From one window of it came a little fluttering handkerchief.

They stared at the tiny flicker of white as if both were petrified.

Miss Nelly, turning sharply away at last, saw Miss Harriet's mouth open, and her nose and face twitching.

"Oh, come along. Don't be a fool," she said brusquely, and led the way home again at a smart pace.

VIII

The week that followed was a gloomy one for the sisters. They went about their work quietly, and did not speak to each other. Only at the end of the week, while Miss Harriet was darning a pair of stockings, she came across in her work-basket a little toy of Jimmy's—a single painted tin coach from a toy railway system—which had been left there in forgetfulness. She turned the little coach over in her hand and thought a little while, and presently Miss Nelly saw a tear run down Miss Harriet's nose. She clenched her teeth in fierce exasperation.

"Oh, you *are!*" cried Miss Nelly in a fever. "I never knew anybody like you. Sigh, sigh, sigh, and now you're crying. All over a baby who's forgotten you ever existed."

"That's not true," said Miss Harriet huskily.

"Of course it's true. A child that age. He's got his sisters."

"He hasn't got me," answered Miss Harriet, staring before her.

Miss Nelly laughed scornfully.

"He's forgotten both of us," she said. "He was just as fond of me."

The words fell like stones in the silence, as any other unconvincing lie drops in its exposed nakedness to the ground.

"No, he wasn't," at last slowly answered Miss Harriet. "It was me he was fondest of. He wouldn't let

you touch his wasp sting. He wouldn't let you put him to bed. It was me he loved. He said good-bye to me. . . ."

The little tin railway coach slipped from her hand as she spoke, and Miss Nelly rose to her feet. Her colour was heightened; her round grey eyes seemed to glow above her broad high cheek bones.

"He was just as fond of me," she persisted. "In every way. Only you fussed over him. Ridiculous the way you fussed over that child." She pretended to laugh in scorn.

"No; he was fondest of me," slowly protested Miss Harriet.

The little coach lay upon the floor.

Miss Nelly, quite crimson, her hands jerking with sudden uncontrollable passion, set her heel upon it, so that the gaudy tin coach was crushed and flattened into a hideous mass.

IX

Two days later there came a delayed letter from Emily Danvers. It was addressed to both Miss Jedburys, but Nelly was in the house alone when the letter arrived. She read the letter, and saw a little enclosure —a twisted piece of paper, like a *billet doux*. The note had fallen out of Emmy's letter. Upon it, in tipsy pencilled capital letters, were the words "TO MY HARRIE." Like lightning Miss Nelly opened the note, and read, in the same tipsy capitals:

DERE HARRY I LOVE YOU
I WISH YOU WAS HERE
LOTS OF KISES FROM YOUR
BOY JIM.

She put the twisted paper down and turned away. Her mouth was a small straight line in her face, bitter and unhappy. She stretched out her hand again for

Jimmy's note, picked it up. "DERE HARRY," she read. And as she did this she clenched her fist, with the paper inside. It was crumpled into a ball. Without knowing what she was doing, Miss Nelly went across to the kitchen range, in which a fire was burning. In an instant the ball was a black flickering wisp, gone for ever. And when Miss Nelly had done this wicked thing she came back to her place, and left Emily's letter so that her sister could see it.

Miss Harriet was not long in coming back from her shopping. She came swinging up the path in her black dress, very gaunt and long-faced, but full of energy, and at once caught sight of Emmy's letter.

"That from Em?" asked Miss Harriet. Miss Nelly bent her head. She could not have spoken. Miss Harriet slowly read the letter, and turned over to the fourth page to read a postscript, as Miss Nelly had not done. "Here, where's my letter?" suddenly demanded Miss Harriet.

"Your what?" Miss Nelly was as pale as death.

"My letter. Em says she's enclosing a letter. What have you done with it? My letter from Jimmy."

"I've seen no—"

"Don't tell lies. Just *look* at you. What have you done with it?"

They faced each other. Miss Harriet, very tall and bony, with two long creases in her long face, and her mouth turned down at the corners, like a witch, and as red as a dull old brick; Miss Nelly, rather shorter, plumper, with grey eyes that sought to hide themselves from Miss Harriet's accusing gaze. There was a grim encounter. Miss Harriet's long, thin finger was raised. Her nose and face twitched unmistakably. Miss Nelly drew her breath. Her nerve failed suddenly. She was ghastly white. She could not for this occasion command the scene. Tears were in her throat.

"I burnt it," she muttered. And then, louder: "Yes, I burnt it. A child's scrawl. Threw it in the fire thinking it was rubbish."

Miss Harriet was at her full height. The grey face was like the face of a martyr.

"You liar. You liar. I'll never say another word to you as long as I live," she cried. "Never." And with that she walked out of the room and out of the cottage.

X

A quarter of an hour later Miss Nelly, from her bedroom, saw Miss Harriet returning, walking up the brick-paved pathway in company with Mr. Brewster, the jobbing builder and carpenter of the village. A jerk ran through Miss Nelly's body at sight of this. She hurried downstairs, and listened from behind the door to what Miss Harriet said to Mr. Brewster.

"Used to be two cottages," she was saying. "I want it two again. Can you brick up this doorway? The rest of the place is all separate. Only wants this doorway bricking up. Can you do it?"

Mr. Brewster, clearly puzzled, fumbled for his reply. He was a very good-natured old man who could remember Miss Jedburys as young girls, and who would have claimed to be a common friend.

"I hope—" he said hesitatingly. "No offence, Miss Harriet, that there's nothing wrong between you and your sister?"

"Never mind about that. We're going to live separate in future, that's all. Can you brick up that doorway? Come on, man. Yes or no."

"Oh, yes, Miss Harriet," stammered Mr. Brewster.

"Well, do. Start tomorrow. See? I want it *finished* tomorrow."

And it was done. And so it remains. And so Miss

Jedburys live now next door to one another. They never meet or speak, but live alone. The whole village knows they have quarrelled, but not what the quarrel was about. For two years now the estrangement has lasted, and there is no sign that it will ever end. Jimmy has never again come to Marshmeadow. He does not write, and his mother does not write, to Miss Jedburys. They never hear of Jimmy. I am waiting to see what happens when one of them falls ill. Both are hardy yet, and the crisis may take ten years to arrive.

POPI AND HUHUU

By Friedebert Tuglas

I

THIS morning the master woke very early. A little greenish-gray light entered through the round window-panes. The room was still dark and the master lit the candle in the brass candlestick. He put on a red jacket and blue trousers, violently coughing as he did so. Then he drew on his shoes and wrapped himself in a dark dressing gown which fell clear down to the ground. As he fastened his shoes, a severe spell of coughing overcame him.

He sighed, took out a necklace of red and black beads and began to pass them between his fingers, his lips gently moving.

From his bed, Popi looked on at his master's movements with his moist brown eyes. He knew the odor of those beads. They seemed to be smooth and tender, and did not please Popi at all. The master's face looked always sad and unwell whenever he rolled the beads.

The master suddenly stopped and fixedly looked at the candle flame. His head, white as snow, was bent

forward and his trembling fingers were joined together. The candle wick began to smoke, but the master did not notice it.

He had recently become very strange. He had been coming home late at night, would sit down near the light, would break his bread, but forget to eat it, and would only hold the bit of bread in his hand and talk to himself.

At night, Popi had been hearing his master sighing deeply in his sleep. Now he got up and approached his master. He wagged his tail, licked his poor master's hands, and sought to console him in his anxious, canine way. But the master paid no attention. He seemed to be having horrible dreams, like the dreams he, Popi, had when he dreamed of wandering along strange roads full of wild, mad dogs.

The master sighed again, rose, put on his leather cap with the big button on top, put out the light, and stooped down to pat Popi's back. "No, no, no," he murmured, caressingly, slowly stroking the dog's soft head. Popi stretched himself out beneath that kindly hand, again wagged his tail, yawned and put his tongue out, very far indeed.

How good he was, this dear old master, when thus sitting before Popi, his dark dressing gown falling in folds upon the floor! Popi could just make out his pale smile in the shadows of the early morning. The master rose and went to the corner where Huhuu's big cage was standing. "What does he have to go there for?" thought Popi, enviously, as he ran to his master's side, wagging his tail furiously.

But the master didn't give anything to Huhuu, as Popi had feared he would do. He only shook his finger at Huhuu, saying, in a tone of remonstrance, "No, no, come here, you!" Huhuu had just waked. He was very sleepy and seemed to be shivering. He rubbed his

shoulders against the cage and held the back of his neck in his hand. As the master shook his finger at him, Huhuu growled with his deep, guttural voice.

Then the master put on his coat. Popi ran in front of him towards the big market basket which was hanging on the wall, but again the master did not notice him. With his head bent forward, he walked toward the door. Outside it was growing lighter. Through the open door one could see a crenelated wall, a slender, narrow tower and the green sky in the background.

The master closed the door in Popi's very face. Popi heard the master walking slowly through the court, heard the outer door open, and then heard it close. Then all became silent. For some moments Popi remained behind the closed door, one ear pricked up, his head perked on one side, to listen. Hearing nothing he left his post by the door. Popi was disappointed. "He isn't bringing any meat today," he thought. "He hasn't brought any for several days. And it would be so easy, too!"

He took several objectless turns about the room. His toenails scratched the smooth floor as he walked over it. His long tail and the tip of his muzzle almost touched the smooth, waxed floor. It was still so dark that his twisted knees collided with the furniture and other things within the room. He could smell the familiar odor of old leather and furniture. Many other things beside recalled to him the amiable memories he had of his master.

It was yet too dark, too cold and too gloomy to stay awake. Popi returned to his bed on the floor and lay down snugly. It was good to be in bed, to warm himself through and through, to crouch well together and to dream. Now, he thought, the master is going through the streets, among many streets, many houses and many masters. But no house is as good as this

one and no master as good as mine. He opened one eye and looked about. Outside it was growing light. Two rows of dull window-panes were colored a rosy red. Shadows were visible on the floor.

"My master is better than any other master in the world," drowsily thought Popi, and closed his open eye. His master's goodness had, clearly, no limit. He might go out with an empty basket, but he always brought it back full of meat. Who would do that except the master?

Popi opened his eye again. The room was still lighter. It was now so light that the crocodile skin, impaled against the ceiling, was distinctly visible. It formed a dark mass, the feet wide apart and the jaws gaping. Popi knew very well that the animal was dead and tranquilly closed his eyes. His master was the only one he knew anything about, he reflected. He liked to go on an occasional stroll with his good master. It was fun to plunge in among the enormous crowds filling the roadways and choking the marketplaces. These strangers, though, could not be trusted and the master could be sure of keeping Popi only by never letting him loose from his leash.

How had it happened that he had found so good a master? Oh, the answer to that was not difficult. It was because he, Popi, was good himself. He had deserved to have a good master. Bad street dogs always have bad street masters. What chance had brought him to this house? He knew nothing of his past. It seemed to him that he had always existed. His present moments ended suddenly as if against a blank wall, and he could hardly remember further back than yesterday.

He had not noticed his own growth. He thought, though he was very doubtful on the point, that his paws had once been softer and his skin and hair more supple and elastic than they were now. That must have been

at the time when the world seemed so queer, when he could not tell living things from inanimate objects, and when he used to wag his tail in front of the furniture. That time was far away, inconceivably far away!

It was good to reflect and dream! It was almost as good as living, or, perhaps, even better than living. In dreams, you see, the master was always good to him and cross to Huhuu, and there was always plenty to eat, more than he could eat.

He woke suddenly because a flea was biting him in the middle of his back. He made an enraged snap at the place. Then he stretched out and yawned. He had slept for a long time. The room was now filled with bright golden light. The upper half of the window, bearing six diamond panes, each one framed in tin or pewter, was open. It allowed one to hear the chattering of the sparrows outside.

Popi took several turns about the room, sniffed at the floor, tested the air of the room, then went to the door and finally felt sure that his master had not yet returned. He had indeed been absent for a long time. Popi strolled about some more, his pointed muzzle continuing to sniff at the floor. His feet were not bearing his head, it was rather his head which was dragging his feet along, so close to the floor and so far forward did his sharp nose protrude in front of him. He scratched at the sideboard, at the base of the wall, at the little recess near the window and at the bookshelves.

He smelled the same old odors which were new every morning and always taught him something. It was strange that all these objects, seeming alike, were in reality different. Inside the sideboard he could smell old pewter plates and pots. In the little recess he could detect the old bagpipe, the brushes, the bellows and the two big beer mugs of different shape. Near

the books he could make out the odor of leather, of the insects that ate the leaves of the books, and the smell which he always knew meant Jews.

The best odors were those of the kitchen. Popi followed his muzzle out to that famous place. His long tail glided through the open kitchen door as a serpent might slip along. The kitchen was high and narrow. In the middle there was a square iron stove with a big stovepipe above, which grew narrower and narrower as it mounted towards the ceiling. On the stove there were pots, pans, kettles, flatirons and many things which stood out as dark spots.

Popi raised his muzzle and moved his moist nostrils to and fro. The kitchen unmistakably smelled of soot. The faint piping of birds was audible through the chimney and stovepipe. There were many good-for-nothing odors in this place. They were not those of food or of anything else a body had any use for. It was here that the master sometimes melted lead or copper, or cooked queer porridge which he neither ate himself nor gave to any one else. There were green jugs, small kegs, platters, pewter bottles, pitchers and jars, little, long-handled stew-pans, and iron utensils of many kinds.

Here and there, happily, Popi could get a sniff of delicate odors of cheese, fat and meat. He smelled them through covers placed over different pots and vessels. From the kitchen table he got smells which made his nostrils vibrate violently and caused his little heart to beat like mad. He could smell out a mixture of earth, grasses and water. In one corner he recognized the odor of squashes, of melons, of cabbage, of artichokes, of carrots and of tomatoes. He found that this odd mixture came out of a basket full of different vegetables, piled in it pellmell.

Popi had had enough of the kitchen and trotted

back to the other room. He stopped in the middle of it, quite suddenly, as if something had occurred to him requiring a special effort of his memory. Huhuu made an abrupt movement and then Popi remembered what he had almost forgotten. His master was not at home. Huhuu moved about again, and another idea occurred to Popi. Perhaps his master was in the back room, asleep, or sitting silently beside the table. He hurried into the back room.

In this room the windows were different from those of the room in front. They had wide sashes, which were filled with tiny, many-colored panes set in pewter. The panes were of different shapes and sizes. When the sun was shining brightly, the light passing through these little panes and falling upon the floor, the walls and the furniture made beautiful spots of lilac, purple, olive-green and soft crimson. The spots were shaped like men's heads, sheep, flowers and stars.

Popi had formed the habit of resorting to this room in the evening to get warm. Each particular color supplied a special degree of heat. Popi lifted up his muzzle and looked at the panes with his shining eyes. He found that there was a separate odor for each separate color. In a corner of this room, under a red canopy, from which were suspended heavy fringe and dull golden acorns, was placed the master's bed.

The room was filled and running over with articles of furniture. Every kind of object imaginable was heaped together, so that walking about in the room was impossible. There were big wardrobes, with mosaic doors, huge leather chairs, old clocks still in excellent order, marking the hours, days and months and representing the earth and sky. Old spinets stood against one wall. Music desks and racks, ancient guitars, Hebrew books with iron clasps, steel helmets, swords, glass mirrors, metal looking-glasses, rugs,

cushions, and costumes in gold and purple, helped to complete the confusion within the room.

From the ceiling, hung the model of a boat, covered with gilding and bearing carven figures of men, sitting in two rows on the deck. On the poop another man, in a red fez, was pointing to the distant horizon. In the middle of the deck, among the others, was a king, sitting on his throne, wearing a crown on his head and holding an apple and scepter in his hand. Popi often looked attentively at this model, with lifted muzzle and body crouched close against the floor. The model seemed to be real. There was something extraordinarily lifelike about it.

However, many of the things in this room were deceiving. As a matter of fact, it contained mostly visions, dreams and fancies. Here there were masters who were not masters at all. Elsewhere there were dogs, horses and birds which did not actually exist. The food in the room never made any one hungry. This food was as unsatisfying and unreal as the food Popi dreamed about. It was painted on panels and canvases enclosed in frames which were slowly dropping to pieces. Some of the pictures represented odd corners full of skinned animals, entrails, lungs, tongues, heads and hides. Others showed tables bearing lambs, geese, swans, turkeys, trout, herrings, eels and shrimps. Still other paintings presented cornucopias full of tomatoes, parsley, onions, asparagus, artichokes, pumpkins and cabbages. Vines and grapes, fauns with cloven feet and wearing clumsy sandals, and nymphs running away somewhere also shone out from some of the canvases.

A large tapestry represented a hunting scene. Young men with mandolins were looking at young girls holding doves, and in the air were peacocks and parrots. One picture showed churches, windmills and wood-

sawyers. A dense forest lay close to a frozen marsh covered with a scanty fall of snow.

Each phantom was in its place, the masters with dreamy faces were smiling from the walls, everything suggested reality, but the real master was not there. Popi approached the bed. He sniffed at his master's dressing gown and his nightcap, and wagged his tail. These things recalled his master to him so vividly that, when he closed his eyes, the familiar smells almost made his master visible. However, it was all only illusory and deceptive, and Popi went sadly back to the front room.

Here the sun was shining through window-panes shaped like the necks of bottles. A golden dust was floating about Huhuu's cage. The room was perfectly still. The sparrows were no longer twittering. Popi felt, of a sudden, very uneasy. He began to hurry hither and thither in the room, never stopping, uttering plaintive cries, as if he were a lost and deserted child. Why didn't his master come back? He asked himself this question over and over. Where was he staying all this time? He had never been gone so long before. Where was he? Where was he? Popi sat down on his flat little bed, folded his tail about his legs, listened, listened, whined in a very low tone and his back bristled up and his skin shook all over as if he were shivering with cold.

II

Time passed, and still the master did not return. Noon was gone already. Still the master did not come. The sun marched over to the other side of the room. Its rays now touched the windows only obliquely, leaving them dark. Still, still the master did not come.

Huhuu began to move about uneasily in his cage. He seemed to be suffering from hunger. He gnawed

the bars of the cage, stuck his paw out between them clear to the elbow, picked up a few stray leaves of lettuce from the floor of the cage and greedily put them in his mouth. The way he held himself crouched together was very, very strange. His face was close to the bars of the cage and his two thin paws were held out like those of an old woman holding a skein of yarn to be rolled into a ball.

Popi, his head well bent over, turned his shining eyes on this companion of his. His eyes wandered to those paws of Huhuu. Who was Huhuu, anyway? He had asked himself this question before. He had no doubts about himself. He was always surely himself. And he knew the master, too. He knew other dogs and masters, who were strangers. But who was this Huhuu, sitting there holding a lettuce leaf? Those fingers were thin, soft and black as coal. They made Huhuu look as if he were wearing specially fine gloves. His entire body was covered with grayish-brown hair. The skin at the back of his neck was stiff, and Huhuu often held his paw there as if he had a headache.

His face was also covered with hair, and to such a degree that it was impossible to tell whether he was gay or sad. His thoughts could never be read. He sometimes looked straight in front of him for hours; his gaze never ceased to be fixed and unwavering. His temper was evidently very bad, otherwise he would not always be shut up in his cage. He was never taken out-of-doors and probably knew nothing of the streets, marketplaces or of any other master. Popi found, on the whole, that he deserved no more than he got. He was kept in his cage quite justly. Even his food was much worse than the food Popi received. They gave him nothing but green vegetables, fruit, and other inedible things.

It was odd, though, how much Huhuu resembled the master. Like the master, he walked erect, or nearly so, and had hands and fingers. Who was he? A second master, perhaps? Could he be a malicious, sly and evil master who had to be always kept in confinement?

Hunger was now really tormenting Popi. He stirred himself, went to his porcelain bowl and took a bone from it. There was no longer any meat on the bone, but Popi could gnaw it, and that would help to pass the time away. He gnawed for some moments, crouched flat on the floor, holding the bone between his forepaws. All the satisfaction he got, though, was a mouth full of water, so he left his bone on the floor, raised his muzzle, and looked at the window. Anguish, and a vague and terrible presentiment oppressed his heart.

The sun disappeared behind a cloud. The room became yellow, then ashen gray. The wind whistled loudly in the chimney and two or three large raindrops struck against the window-panes. Popi uttered loud and plaintive barks, raising his forepaws one after the other, bending them and relaxing them as if he had chilled them by sitting for a long time on ice. This horrible cold silence lasted for some moments. Only Popi's gentle whining was heard in the room.

Huhuu had seated himself and was listening. Then, suddenly, he stood up straight, strutted across his cage, jumped up and down on his four elbows, stopped, listened again and burst into a sinister laugh, jumping about until his bones fairly clattered together. Popi was much frightened at this, and contracted his big, drooping ears close to his head. How very disquieting all this was! How very disquieting! Where could the master be?

Huhuu began to run about his cage, grasping now

one bar of the cage, now another, and shaking them violently. A few yellowish, feathery clouds were passing across the sunlight and the light within the room was continually changing. All that Popi could see in this ashen twilight was the odd way in which Huhuu's dark shadow was projected here and there.

The door-frame of Huhuu's cage suddenly snapped and gave way. Huhuu remained within the cage for a moment. The wind was roaring at the windows. Then Huhuu gave his door a push, and it opened. Huhuu was frightened. He had not expected this and did not know what to do. He approached the open door and sat down at the threshold, waiting very prudently until he could well reflect, holding firmly to the frame of the doorway.

From his bed on the floor Popi, frightened at this, looked at Huhuu. He was half sitting up, his hind legs drawn well up in front and his skin very taut. Huhuu's astonishment remained only a moment. He slipped his chest forward, pressed his chin down on his chest, turned up his tail and, still sitting on his haunches, dragged himself towards Popi by two little steps. Then he suddenly strutted up again, coughed and jumped.

Popi disappeared under the sideboard like a tennis ball, howling as he went. He had to lie down, for the sideboard was low, and close to the floor. His heart was beating so hard that his nails clicked against the floor, although he was holding himself perfectly still. All was silent for some moments. Then he saw and heard Huhuu walking about on his soft paws, heard him stop, and then all was silent again. Popi carefully slid to the edge of the sideboard, to see what was going on. Evening was falling outside, and twilight was creeping into the room.

In the middle of the shadowy expanse was crouched

Huhuu, gnawing a lettuce leaf, which he held in his hands. It did not take him long to swallow the lettuce leaf. Then, looking about him, he discovered the great purple rug hanging above the door of the back room. He approached the rug, pulled its fringe and drew it toward him. The rug fell down and covered Huhuu up in it. He was frightened, groped about within the rug for a while, finally dragged himself out and crept away, glancing back with distrust at the rug as he fled from it.

He began a search for food. On the table he found a few beans, and ate them. Then he went to the threshold of the kitchen door, and was soon investigating the basket of vegetables. Popi heard him gnawing at the carrots. Then Huhuu seemed to have another idea. He seized the basket by the handle and dragged it into the other room, where he spilled its contents out on the floor. Pumpkins, melons and tomatoes rolled pellmell everywhere.

Huhuu sat down in the midst of it all and ate away, first attacking the apples and then trying the cabbages. Popi was only a few paces away, his chin pressed down on the chilly floor and his two forepaws placed beside his chin. His frightened thoughts were much upset and confused. He stared hard at Huhuu with his violet eyes and the skin at the back of his neck bristled up rigidly.

Huhuu soon ceased to eat and began to roll a large pumpkin across the floor. The room, growing darker in the twilight, was quite silent except for the noise made by the rolling pumpkin, and the pattering of Huhuu's paws. The pumpkin rolled under the table and Huhuu lost it in the darkness. He stopped. The room was becoming very dark, and he seemed afraid.

Through the rosy panes of the back-room window the setting sun was now throwing only feeble gleams. This

room was lighted best at evening. From it a beam of pale, faint rays entered the front room through the open doorway. Huhuu stood on the threshold of the back room, waiting cautiously. Then he made a few steps within it, and Popi saw his thin, hairless tail disappearing beyond the door sill. The rustling of garments could be heard, then Huhuu laughed aloud several times, and then everything was quiet.

Popi waited a long time, his heart beating hard with fear. However, everything remaining perfectly quiet he gently came out from under the sideboard and slowly approached the entrance of the back room. Through the parti-colored window a narrow beam of dark red and deep violet light was entering the room. Huhuu was sitting on the master's bed beneath the red canopy. He had wrapped himself in the master's dressing gown, had put the nightcap on his head, had pulled up the collar of the gown about his ears, and was fast asleep.

Popi remained motionless for some moments, lifting his muzzle toward the bed, and looking at Huhuu intently. Then he glided back beneath the sideboard, seeking the remotest corner he could find. Everything was whirling about within his little brain. Some frightful dream, some ghostly fancy, was revolving before him. He crouched as flat as he could below the sideboard, trembling with dread.

What had happened? He did not know. Something unusual, disquieting and incomprehensible was occurring. How and why had it come about? Popi sought to recall the different events. The master had gone out. He had sat down to wait for the master. The sun had set, the wind had risen, the room had become yellow, and Huhuu had escaped from his cage. Had all this actually occurred? What had happened later in the yellow twilight? Who had pulled the

purple rug down on the floor? Where was Huhuu? Was it Huhuu who was sitting under the red canopy in a yellow gown and red cap?

Now it was quite dark, in the room and outside. The wind was blowing about the doors and windows. The rain was beginning to crackle, first slowly, then falling harder and harder for hours. Where was the master now? thought Popi. Where had he gone? When would he come back?

All night long Popi kept his vigil by the icy wall, trembling with fear and cold. He listened to the mournful beating of the rain and waited, waited for his master. Still the master did not come. He would never come.

Toward morning, Popi dropped asleep for a while. He dreamed that it was evening and that he was with the master in the street outside the house. The sky was covered with ashen-gray clouds. The dark streets grew darker and darker as they stretched away in the distance. Popi did not know where they had come from. They had been wandering for a long time. After the street came the marketplace, after the market there was another street, but they seemed never to arrive at the house. Popi was trembling with fatigue, wavered from one twisted leg to another, and tottered about in these endless muddy streets. It was indeed very strange to see everything so gray and deserted.

The master was walking ahead, his head forward and his back bent. He seemed very tired as he led Popi onward with the leash. He did not stop or look behind him. How much smaller and thinner the master was! His black coat was dragging along the ground and his head could not be seen at all under his leather cap.

Popi was becoming more and more weary with this long walk. He dragged his tired feet behind his

master. The leash was now stretched taut as he pulled upon it and his master's hand was drawn far behind. The master continued to walk along without stopping or looking behind. In the twilight, Popi looked at his master's hand. It was small and hairy. The fingers were black as coal and their nails were very long. Popi suddenly felt a strange uneasiness. Where had they come from? Where were they going to? Who was it at the other end of the leash? Was it the master?

In the midst of the gray and forsaken street a nameless fear tugged suddenly at Popi's heart. His body was trembling, and he could walk no longer. That man who was leading him kept pulling him along without stopping or looking behind. They advanced a few steps more. Popi's strength was now rapidly failing him. He was dragging more and more at his leash. His collar was compressing his throat. The skin on his forehead was so wrinkled that he could hardly keep his eyes open.

With a sudden access of terror, he realized that the man ahead was not the master. He stiffened his paws against the pavement and clung to the cold stones with clicking nails. The leash was almost pulling his head off.

The man ahead now turned for the first time to look behind. Popi saw his face. With a plaintive cry, he leaped from under the sideboard into the middle of the room, trembling in every nerve. At the same instant, he saw the master standing at the threshold of the room, his hand upon the doorknob, dressed in his everyday clothes, his nightcap on his head.

Popi looked hard at him for a few brief moments, completely bewildered by this sudden quick moment of happiness. But suddenly the hair bristled up stiffly on his neck and infinite anguish came into his eyes.

The face he saw was the one he had seen when the man turned in his dream!

Their life together began from that day. The reality was more fantastic than Popi's dream, and was a dream more terrible than reality. Popi could not tell where the boundaries of his life ended and where those of the dream began. He could no longer separate the two and lived from day to day, trembling between the two extremes of his existence. When he awoke in the morning, saw the sun shining into the room, and felt new strength within him, he still hoped to escape this ghostly existence.

The old master will come back to the house, he thought. He will subdue Huhuu, put him back in the cage, and the happy life of old will begin again. This hope was vain. He soon heard the sharp cry made by Huhuu, coming from another room, and then Huhuu himself appeared at the threshold. He wore a new costume every day. He opened the wardrobes, rummaged about in the sideboards and put on any clothes which pleased him. He strutted for hours before the mirror, like a child at play. Placing three mirrors in a corner, he examined himself now from before, now from behind.

He poured hair oil over his back and rubbed his face like a woman applying cosmetics. Then he turned his back toward the mirror and squinted his eyes around to see the back of his neck. He was as gay and happy as a child. At such times he was good-natured, and Popi could scent, without danger, the remains of food left upon the floor. Huhuu would not incommode himself for anything.

He had a strange taste in clothes. He sometimes put on three coats, one over the other. Sometimes he put the overcoat on first, and the shirt outside. Sometimes he put on nothing whatever except a hat

upon his head and a lace collar around his neck. Sometimes he appeared in a black velvet coat with wide sleeves, striped collar, big shiny buttons and a dagger at the waist.

Again, he was clad like a comedian in a dark red coat, beneath which a fat belly was protruding, on his head a bright-red, three-cornered hat, the three tips ringing like little bells. He might appear, dressed like the king of the little model of the boat, in a purple mantle, trimmed with fur, and provided with a long train and a heavy chain about the neck. And lastly, he sometimes showed himself abruptly, seeming like a corpse brought to life, in a yellow linen tunic, with a black cross upon his breast and a hood pulled down over his forehead.

All these costumes were worn without the slightest care or pains. He tore them fiercely, snatched them from his body in an hour, and left them lying forgotten on the floor. He was continually discovering things which interested him. He was always eating. He opened the closets in the kitchen and took out all the food within his reach. He gnawed the biscuits. Scraps which remained he threw on the floor. It was these scraps which formed Popi's food during those dark, gloomy nights when he ventured outside his corner, slipping furtively along by the wall. Huhuu liked vegetables best. He stuffed his mouth with loose tobacco and all sorts of spices. He liked those things. The saliva dripped plentifully from his mouth and he spat about him like a sailor.

He passed his days in play. He gathered together bright balls, pretty things, knives, forks and spoons, and placed them all on the purple rug. He rolled the whole collection for hours between his fingers, as a child plays with pebbles. From time to time he tried working at the table. But he had not the perseverance of

the old master. He broke the spectacle lenses to pieces, smashed the base of the terrestrial globe, and tore the books to bits.

He would sit down on the floor to unroll a lot of parchments, but instead of examining them with his eyes the would try them with his teeth. Then he would throw the parchments away as things of no value. He broke the great wall clock to bits. He smashed the hands and tore out all the mechanism. Shading his eyes with his hand, he carefully examined all the little wheels and the rest of the movement. He destroyed everything he touched. He injured the pictures, the windows and the mirrors. He took away from the walls, and removed from the drawers, everything which he could reach. He left nothing untouched.

He seemed to be like the old master and yet different. He might easily have been good and kind, but he did not wish to be. He was malicious and ill-tempered. He was most terrible at evening, after the fatigue of the day. He then delighted in tormenting Popi, and his malice was unbounded. He chased poor Popi across the room, threw kitchen utensils at him and pricked him with skewers when he fled under the furniture. He hit him on the head with a stick, threw liquids all over him and pierced his ears. All Popi did was to whine and cry with fear and pain. Sometimes he tried to resist. From beneath the sideboard he snapped his teeth fiercely, yapped loudly, and growled at the skewer with which Huhuu was pricking him. All his efforts and resistance were vain. His sole refuge was the sideboard. The sideboard was so low that his legs became more and more twisted from his visits to its shelter. Since he often had to flee very quickly under it, the skin on his neck and back became torn and finally very sore. The food that he had was

insufficient, and he suffered all day long from agonizing thirst.

His restless sleep was filled with dire fancies and his dreams only restored the reality. His brain was darkening. His memory became feebler and feebler, and he could no longer distinguish between the past and his dreams. Every connection with former times was lost. Now he retained only a faint memory of his happy past life, his good master and the remote and vanished golden age through which he had lived. His memories were like phantoms. They were only dreams and floating images.

How long ago was it that he had seen the old master? An infinite period had passed since the master had gone away. Was it today, yesterday, or months or years ago that he had departed? More and more did he forget the face and voice of the good old master, as they disappeared in the mists on the far horizon.

In dreams, though, he could see him more clearly. There he could make out his snowy, white hair and his gentle smile. At such times he would wake up, thinking that his master had called him. When he was awake, though, only the reality was about him. All that existed were the malicious master and the devastated room.

From time to time, he had the expectation that somebody would come. He did not know whether it would be the master or somebody else. Sometimes he heard voices penetrating the walls. Sometimes he perceived the sound of heavy shoes, outside in the street, but nobody came.

He became satisfied with the new master. He became habituated to fear and respect. He was old, sick and foolish and the present master would do very well. He knew fully that it was Huhuu. He could have identified him by his odor, had other signs been

lacking. He was losing his faith in odors, though, as he had lost it concerning other things. His sense of smell was getting weak and he was no longer sure about odors. Everything was deceiving him, even odors!

His two masters became confused in his mind. They melted into a single individual. Each formed only a half of the whole person. As he had once admired the goodness, kindness and beauty of his old master, he now admired the malice, capricious humor and ugliness of his new one. The new master was almost the exact opposite of the old one in everything, though he possessed a hidden intelligence and ability which Popi did not have.

The old master used to enter and leave by the door. The new master did so by the window. He would leap upon the table, climb to the window and disappear. While Popi was waiting for him to come back he would stay in the middle of the room, astonished. Huhuu sometimes remained away for hours. Popi had no idea what he was doing. The absence of the new master, though, seemed just as mysterious and important as had been the absences of the old one. Sometimes Huhuu dragged outside the house garments, books and cushions, bringing back in their place sticks, empty bottles and tiles. He filled the cupboards with straw and poured water from a jug into the interior of the room from the window.

His conception of the values of things was peculiar. He completely altered all the odors within the house. Sometimes he was absent for a long time and everything indoors was quiet. Then Popi would be wearied and wait for Huhuu impatiently. He would become uneasy, run from one room to another, and utter plaintive cries, as he had done for the old master. He wanted Huhuu to come back. He was willing to have

Huhuu beat him all he wanted to, if only he would not leave him forsaken.

The most curious thing was that the new master seemed to take a certain care of Popi. He did this after his rough and capricious style, but Popi appreciated it, nevertheless. One day, in particular, he brought some meat back with him. He had remained absent for a long time, and had with him a market basket when he finally returned. Inside the basket were vegetables, bread and a little raw meat hidden below the other things.

Huhuu shook out the basket on the floor, became frightened when he saw the blood of the raw meat, and ran away. Popi seized the meat, ran under the sideboard with it and was able to chew it for several days. After that day, when Huhuu brought the meat, Popi thought much more of him and understood that he was really the master.

The master climbed up again on the wall. But this time he came back very soon, and all the dogs in the streets seemed barking outside. The master's clothes were in rags. His skin was torn and bleeding and his paws left a trail of blood wherever they were placed. He crouched in a corner, licked his wounds and murmured low complaints. He was ill for a long time.

Popi then realized how close he was to Huhuu. He went to him every night and morning, as he had done formerly to his old master, to show his sorrow and pity. The smooth, grayish-blue eyelids of the master were closed, but he was breathing so softly that his sleep seemed light and restless. His face wore an expression of the deepest gravity and his heavy jowls were singularly sad. Popi was seized with pity and sympathy. He took care of Huhuu as an old servant takes care of his master when that master has become old and childish. How old and awkward they both

were! Their lives were becoming sadder and sadder. The days were shorter and there was but little sunlight. A cold rain fell, from morning to night.

Popi shivered as he lay upon his bed. Huhuu wrapped himself up in blankets. He was now clumsy and stiff in his play, trembled when he sat down, and looked before him without the least interest. One day he found a little keg in the kitchen and rolled it into the other room. He put his ear against the keg and heard gurgling as the keg rolled hither and thither. He smelled at the bung, which emitted a marvelous fragrance. It was at once heavy, mild, toothsome and bewildering. He removed the stopper and poured some of the liquid from the keg.

From that time, Huhuu began to drink. The only joy and interest he now possessed was to drink and become drunk. When he woke in the morning, his head was heavy with the wine, his hair rough and bristling, his eyes red and weak. He would lift the keg to the level of his mouth, swallowing eagerly until he felt himself becoming good-natured. Then he would mutter and dance about, leaping and staggering until he was weary. Then he would sit down on the floor, lift the keg to his lips again and drink, the wine streaming from his mouth along his cheeks.

When he was drunk, he would go to sleep, holding the keg close to him in a fond embrace, his hands resting on the keg and his face twisted in a smile. Popi liked him this way. He reminded Popi of that other master, who used to sit down much in the same way in the evening, holding his glass up to the light and smiling as he talked to himself with a satisfied air. Popi no longer feared Huhuu. They slept together and helped keep each other warm.

The drunken Huhuu would grope for Popi's head, and Popi would lick Huhuu's hand. Both became in-

toxicated, Huhuu by drinking and Popi by smelling the odor of the wine which filled the room. Neither any longer remembered anything. When the keg was empty, Huhuu found another. He developed a marvelous capacity for finding kegs. He scented out the wine, whose odor was sharpened by his imagination. He became able to open bottles and drink from them.

One day the snow began to fall. It alighted, thick as down. A pale glow was reflected from the ceiling, and the colors within the room changed their hues. Through the broken window the snow and the cold entered the room, and a light wind scattered snowflakes over the overturned furniture. The two old drunkards raised their heads and found everything covered with a white coating.

But there was no more wine. Huhuu had begun to drink as soon as he woke, but the wine lasted only a moment. He staggered into the kitchen to look for more. He groped about for a long time, but his search was vain. He rummaged about, turning the furniture over and over and throwing the room into a terrible confusion. Finally, beneath some of the overturned pitchers and pots into which the old master had formerly poured that queer porridge of his, Huhuu found something which surely might contain wine. It was a tin box, square in shape, and soldered along all its edges. Huhuu thought he could smell wine inside the box, and brought it back with him into the other room.

Huhuu was then wearing a red, quilted jacket. Popi sat down in front of him, his muzzle raised, and his long tail resting on the floor. Huhuu tried to open the box. He scratched it with his nails and tried it with his teeth. Then he raised the box high in the air and threw it down as hard as he could.

A terrible explosion followed. The flames mounted

to the ceiling. Huhuu was thrown against one wall, Popi against another. The house collapsed with a mighty roar.

GERDRUTA CARPONAI

By Aino Kallas

I

IN the Spring of 1710, during the Great Northern War, while the Russians were besieging Riga, a deadly pestilence called the Black Death came down from the interior to the islands, first to Hiiumaa, then to Saaremaa, thence across the little Sound to Muhu and finally during the autumn to the lonely island of Ruhnu.

Many tales are yet told of the coming of the plague. The fishermen of Hiiumaa were aware one evening of a strange, forbidding vessel which had anchored near the harbour of Eltermaa. They gathered together to discuss the newcomer, but rowed finally over with provisions. When they had drawn near, the vessel seemed devoid of all human life, the deck was empty, the mast and spars like those on a derelict. They were about to row back to land, when suddenly a boy about a foot and a half in height and dressed in grey, climbed from the hold on to the deck and jumped straight from the bulwarks into the boat. Twice they threw the boy into the sea, and twice he bounced back into the boat, like a grey-scaled fish. When they reached the shore he disappeared immediately among the hazel-bushes and all they had had time to see of him was that he was dressed in the German style with a three-cornered hat and a staff in his hand. Then the oldest on board the boat clasped his hands and suddenly each began to

From *The White Ship*, by permission of the publisher, Jonathan Cape.

shiver; they understood: the plague had come to the island. The following day one half of the village of Eltermaa lay dead.

The plague took its victims suddenly; it germinated in the ground and fell as dew from the sky. People were beset by feverish, poisonous spasms, which caused the blood to boil in their veins. Their heads became roaring furnaces, a numb weakness overcame their limbs, unconsciousness followed, their poisoned blood broke out in blue tumours which covered the neck and armpits. Their faces were distorted beyond recognition before death, their senses left them; within a few hours they died in grievous agony.

Marvellous and terrible things happened; all was possible. Fiery red cocks sat on gate-posts and their crow meant death; whosoever saw them first and uttered a word about them, fell and died where he stood. God seemed to have forgotten the distinctions of class that He Himself had in His wisdom ordained between the Germans and the unfree. The plague chose not, showing no respect for ancient names or noble blood. A name in the book of the Plague betokened death for its owner. Highly-born Councillors of State, estate-owners and knights whose pedigrees stretched to the Crusades, died like the most wretched truck-servants or day-labourers; the one in his oaken bed, the other on his bundle of straw. At the poorhouse both keepers and inmates died. The former German merchants of Kuresaar fell dead among the ruins of their demolished dwellings, behind the smokestacks of which they had sought shelter. Priests sank down in their pulpits while arraigning a generation so deep in sin that its degradation had called down Heaven's punishment; the bell-ringers died as they tolled the funeral chimes for others. It was plain: God had closed the doors and windows of Heaven, but the gates of Hell stood wide open.

Having sought in vain for shelter in the Holy Sacrament and at the altar of the Church, men began secretly to sacrifice on the stone of Upa and in the sacred grove at Kaarma, where at the foot of a sacred holy mountain ash, human blood had once been spilt to appease Taara. But the old peasant gods were dead or become blind and deaf in their old age. Christ, the only son of God, was helpless, but equally so Taara, the god of peasants.

But at night the little grey man passed from hut to hut, from manor to manor. The charred doors of chimneyless huts opened before him as easily as the brass-clamped portals of the manors, and he touched the sleepers below the heart with the sharp point of his staff.

Summer came, and with it drought and heat, and the plague waxed fiercer. Whole villages were exterminated. The corpses were carried in loads to the bog-pits, piled over one another so that the flaxen tresses of young maidens swept the road as they passed. But soon there were no grave-diggers, and the dead lay as they fell, no one daring to touch them.

The fields were left unploughed, meadows became choked with undergrowth. In the lifeless villages, where the bodies lay unburied, the cattle, left to themselves, ran wild. Cows roamed in the forests, lowing with bursting udders. The spirit of the wolf awoke in homeless dogs; they attacked the flocks they had been set to herd, or, thinned to the bone, they crept through the villages, wondering whither the masters that fed them had disappeared. The starving swine broke from their styes and satisfied their hunger on the bodies of the plague-stricken, lying unblessed by the Church. From their hiding places in the marsh islands and the forests of Sorve and Karja came the wolves, and with the freezing of the Great and Little Sounds the bears left the interior, seeking their prey.

The race of man seemed doomed to perish. Life came to a standstill with all the common tasks of man, the ploughing, the sowing and reaping, the hunt for game or fish, marriage. It seemed God's purpose to empty the land of man, and bring it to the state that prevailed before man's creation. But the land was far from being a Paradise. It was burned and wasted, and over the waters the Angel of Destruction moved.

II

At the time when all was God-forsaken, a priest of German race lived in one of the coastal parishes, called Magnus Carponai, and married to Beata von Krämer, of gentle birth, the daughter of a Councillor of State. They had several children, amongst whom a daughter Gerdruta, nineteen years old, was the eldest. As so often with German maidens of noble birth brought up in the country, Gerdruta Carponai was of healthy and blooming appearance, over-browned perhaps in the summers by the sea wind, well proportioned, and with hair the colour of wild nuts inclining to copper as with her mother's family, eyes as blue-green gems, a finely modelled bridge to her delicately chiselled, aristocratic nose. When she sat beside her mother with proud neck bent, as befitted a virtuous maiden, in the vicarage pew at church, the noble youths who arrived on horseback or driving teams of four at the German service, all gazed in her direction. One Sunday, her cousin on her mother's side, Rembert von Rehren, of the manor of Loona and serving in the garrison at Fort Kuresaar, remained at the vicarage for the evening. August had set in and the dark cherries were ripening. Rembert von Rehren seized a ladder, and, climbing into a tree, began to pelt Gerdruta with ripe cherries. Gerdruta gathered them in her hands and her apron; finally she cast herself down in the grass below the tree and

attempted with her lips to catch the falling berries, which gleamed like the ruddiest amber and split asunder with their ripeness. Rembert von Rehren was pale as he descended the ladder; his eyes could not quit the blood of cherries on Gerdruta's lips. Standing opposite each other they were almost of a height, ruddy-haired, long-necked members of the same race. The vicarage garden was moist and silent: under a lichen-clad cherry-tree they kissed.

This happened, as legend tells, in August. The whole winter Gerdruta Carponai prepared her trousseau, the nuptials were announced for the beginning of May. But they were stern times and troubled, and in March the Cossacks and Tartars attacked and plundered the country from Kuivaste on Muhu to Sorve Säär. In their footsteps came the plague, Rembert von Rehren being one of the first officers to die in the garrison of Kuresaar; he was followed by the greater part of the garrison.

At the end of June death swept through the Carponais' parish. It was one of the most fertile and thickly populated on Saaremaa; wherefore the destruction caused by the plague was greater than elsewhere, the sickness seeking out the most fertile spots. Carponai set watchmen on the roads from other parishes, forbidding the entrance of beggars and strangers to the parish. He prepared a powder of sulphur and pine resin, with which he smoked the dwellings; the thresholds he sprinkled with vinegar and nitric acid. He caused bonfires of juniper to be lit round the villages, to be kept alight day and night. The congregation gathered for common prayer at the Church. Nothing was of avail. The plague defied both prayers and nitric acid; it passed through fire and the smoke of burning juniper.

Carponai continued the fight with the courage of despair. He forced the survivors to drag out the bodies of the dead with boathooks through the windows and convey them to the grave. His wife and the four youngest children died; for lack of a sexton he climbed the steeple himself and tolled the funeral chimes. He would not surrender; as long as his feet would bear him, he attended the sick and comforted the dying. His daughter Gerdruta accompanied him, with eyes like blue-green ice, opened wide and cold, her mouth dead and pale. One morning Carponai felt a fierce heat in his blood—it was the plague. He did not doubt for a moment that death was nigh and he commanded his daughter Gerdruta to bury the silver chalice and paten in the ground beside the church. This done, he caused Gerdruta to bring the church registers, writing with nerveless hand in large and painstaking letters *omnes mortui*—all dead.

When Carponai drew his last breath the sun was already high in the sky. Gerdruta covered her father's body with a sheet and, going out, sat down on the lowest step of the stairs; she understood now that she was alone.

None other created in the same mould as herself existed; man, God's image, had died out.

A great agony of the soul, deeper than bodily pain, came over her; she shouted out and then waited. But the silence continued, there was no one else.

Then Gerdruta decided to await death on the threshold of her home. She prayed to be allowed to die, offering voluntarily her youthful limbs, her virgin body to the plague.

But the hours sped by and death came not.

With the coming of evening she remembered suddenly that a one-eyed old woman, nearly ninety years of age, Liiva Ingel, had been alive a few days earlier.

She remembered having passed Liiva Ingel's hut and seen smoke curling from the smoke-hole.

Gerdruta Carponai felt that God Himself had sent this thought. She set forth immediately, going straight over pasture-lands and bog, and her yearning to see a living human being was so great that it wellnigh stifled her.

What mattered it that this being was a bleary-eyed, foul old woman, tottering on the verge of the grave!

Breaking through the last hazel-thicket, Gerdruta paused: before her lay a juniper heath with one lonely hut set in its midst. But the door was shut, likewise the smoke-trap, and no smoke was visible.

Gerdruta tried to persuade herself that the old woman had no fire burning at the time. But on opening the door of the hut, a familiar scene met her gaze: on the bed lay Liiva Ingel, dead of the plague; her body already cold and in the first stage of decomposition.

As though struck to the heart, Gerdruta Carponai turned and fled to the great forests, no longer knowing what she did. She fled before her own loneliness, heavier to bear than the plague itself.

III

Gerdruta Carponai did not know afterwards how long she had wandered in the wilds and bogs of Saaremaa. It was morning when she reached the seashore, a bright morning, a joy for insects and human beings alike. But the heart of Gerdruta Carponai ached with loneliness and was heavy with death; she decided to wait there and die.

She bent down to cast herself upon the beach, when suddenly in the damp sand she became aware of a human footprint.

There was no mistaking it. It was of recent date, the impress of a firm foot, the marks of toes and heel

plainly visible, the instep arched. Behind it was a second, a third, a whole line of footprints along the smooth sand, disappearing only over a rise towards the land.

Gerdruta nearly collapsed. A human footprint! The world was not then empty of men. She was not alone.

And bending lower than ever before even the mightiest in the land, the proud, gentleborn Gerdruta Carponai bowed down and, with eyes brimming over with tears, humbly kissed the footprint of the unknown in the sand.

But the sudden joy proved too strong for her exhausted body, she drooped like a reed, and falling, lay senseless on the sand.

The sun had travelled a long way through the sky and was shining directly over the grey rocks when she awoke. She had slept many hours. She saw that while asleep she had been carried to the water's edge and placed on a heap of nets, a bundle of dry reeds serving as pillow. To the left the shore rose in high rocky cliffs straight from the sea, but close under the cliffs she could see a dozen or so chimneyless huts and drying-poles for nets. The sea was calm, but a hollow booming told of a hidden swell.

Beside her a young man was broiling flatfish between two stones. He was dressed in ordinary peasant attire, wearing a coarse hempen robe kept together by a parti-coloured belt, and no footwear. He was very thin, with long uncombed light hair, eyes light-grey.

Seeing Gerdruta awake, he said in the peasant tongue without leaving his occupation:

"Thou wilt eat?"

Gerdruta only nodded in reply. The man handed her a fish and she ate. The fish was fresh and fat, but without salt.

"All dead?" asked the man.

"Dead,—every one," Gerdruta answered in the peasant tongue.

"Here too," the man said.

They sat silent a while, secretly examining each other.

"I am Laes—Kadariku Laes—from yonder hut," said the man finally. "And thou?"

"Gerdruta Carponai," replied Gerdruta.

And even as she spoke she was fully aware that who she might be was as little of account as the white cloud above her that melted in the sun.

The man only stirred the fire and said:

"From thy dress I saw thee to be a German. But now we are the only living in the whole parish."

"I saw thy footprints in the sand," Gerdruta said.

The man glanced at his sunburned brown feet and nodded.

"I went to carry water from the spring," he said.

Having finished their meal they set out for the cliffs.

Evening was already nigh.

On the summit of the cliffs dark-coloured late strawberries grew beneath the junipers that had been gnawed all over by sheep, though berrying time was long over.

They bent down to pick them, gave them to one another and ate.

The berries had a spiced and perfumed flavour. They ate a long time, like children, among the juniper bushes.

The setting sun, sinking towards the distant, invisible Ojumaa, shone in their faces, but there was no need for them to close their eyes against it. The sun floated in banks of warm grey mist, emitting no rays.

"What is it, that boom?" asked Gerdruta.

"There are other cliffs under the water," Laes explained. "One must pour ale and vodka into the sea there, otherwise there will be no luck in fishing."

They sat on the cliff's edge, sated with berries. Neither asked what was to follow. Beneath them was the cliff of slate, a hundred feet in height.

But for Gerdruta Carponai it was as though she had been born in a world altogether new.

It was a world she had never before visited. As in the former, here were air, land and sea, but the only mortals were they two, Kadariku Laes and Gerdruta Carponai.

The seagulls hovered over the water, with wings black in the shadow, a humming and murmuring arose from the grass. Everything in nature continued to live. But they two were the only human beings left.

There were no longer slaves or free; German or peasant, class or station. All that man had built up during the centuries had gone.

Under a thick cluster of juniper quite close to them, a viper bathed in the failing sunshine. Laes noticed it at the same time as Gerdruta and in the same instant he had cut off a branch, split it at one end and caught the viper's head in it as in a vice.

Gerdruta saw the snake writhing at the end of the stick, yellow stomached, black stripes along its back, the forked tongue playing from its mouth.

"Rästik," * Laes said, and lifted it high into the air.

He did not kill it, however; instead he cast it away, far behind him.

"The grain stops growing if a snake is killed," he explained his action.

But as Laes cast the snake from him it was as though Gerdruta saw him for the first time, saw his youthful frame, thin with starvation, the fine firm line of his jaw and beneath it a horizontal scar with even edges as though from a blow with a knife,—his nose, with wide nostrils, high and straight between his eyes, his hands,

* Estonian for viper, or adder.

which in their strength resembled sledge-hammers. Neither the hempen robe nor the effects of hunger could hide the youthful strength of his body. Its every movement was swift, to the purpose and economical of strength.

At the same time she became aware that Laes was deep in like contemplation of herself. As he looked on her she felt herself flushing red. Almost at the same moment they turned away in opposite directions.

After that they looked at each other no more.

They descended from the cliffs to the shore again. The surface of the rock was dotted with beds of rock-crystal, like the petrified nests of prehistoric birds. The sea was brightly smooth, its bottom paved with flat layers of rock like a floor.

There, on the deserted shore, in a country empty of human inhabitants, it came to both at once. Death rose to their brains as a mighty intoxication. They were drunk with it as with strong drink. Their youthful healthy bodies yearned unknowing each for the other, to create new life on the wasted earth. All the desolation they had seen burned in their brains, arousing in them a strange passion.

There were only they two.

The sun had set when they returned to the hut of Laes. Laes, the fisher, opened the door and the highly born Gerdruta Carponai entered. And in their fierce embrace on the bed of straw, their horror of death mingled with the yearning for life of generations yet to come. The world was empty and to these two fell the duty of repeopling it, and they were as alone as the two first human beings.

IV

This is the tale of Gerdruta Carponai, during the year of the Black Death of Saaremaa.

As may be seen from the church registers for the time of the Great Northern War, the five sons of Kadariku Laes were baptized seven years later at midsummer, all at the same time. Their mother, Gerdruta Carponai, daughter of the former vicar of the parish, the worthy Magnus Carponai, and of his gentle-born wife, Beata von Krämer, had on the other hand to atone for her sin by sitting three Sundays following on the bench for immodest women in her father's church, for all to see. Thus, the stern and uncompromising vicar of that time, Heinrich Bürger, has with his own hand written in the church register: *"—hat auf dem berüchtigten Hurenschemel ihre Sedes halten müssen."*

Whosoever wishes, may even to-day see this bench among the other lumber of the church: a low, wooden bench, fenced in like a pen.

After Gerdruta Carponai had thus publicly atoned for her sins in the sight of the whole congregation and received absolution at the altar, she was given in Christian wedlock to Kadariku Laes and taken again into the fold of the Church. From the mouth of the people one may hear that the whole present population of the parish had this couple to thank for its being, according to which they have increased within two centuries in far more wondrous measure than the children of Israel in Egypt.

Of the later phases of Gerdruta Carponai's life nothing is known. She disappeared from the sight of men as a stone sinks in a bog, disappeared for ever in the low caste of her husband, into an alien people, unacknowledged by her own family or caste. Her children were fishers and slaves. But she had lived through a world hidden since the days of Paradise from men: a world without grades of value, without caste or class, without the many-coloured tinsels of

man's devising, a world with two lovers dwelling in it alone.

PRIVATE BROMMIT'S CONVERSION

By André Maurois

Paris vaut bien une messe.
Henri IV.

AURELLE was wakened every morning by Colonel Parker's orderly, a tough, thick-set, astute old soldier, who expounded the unwritten laws of the army for the benefit of the young Frenchman as he dexterously folded his clothes.

"You know, sir," he said, "as 'ow the British Tommy 'as to go to church in peacetime every blessed Sunday. When the time for p'rade comes along, the orficer on dooty gives the order to fall in accordin' to religions, an' the Church of England men, an' the Presbyterians an' the Cath'lics is marched up to their services, rifles an' all.

"The orficer takes charge of one of the detachments, an' in the others the senior N.C.O. for each religion marches at the head. Wotever dodge you try on, there's no gettin' out of it.

"When once you've gone an' accepted the King's shillin', it stands to reason you've got to put up with lots o' things, but Church P'rade's *the* very limit. Don't you take me for a 'eathen, sir; I'm much more of a believer than 'eaps of others. I don't mind singin' 'ymns, an' when the preacher can talk a bit, I don't objeck to sermons. But what used to get on my nerves was the cleanin' up Sunday mornin's. You've only seen us in khaki; you don't know our peacetime church togs. Some blasted togs they were too, an' no mistake —all glitterin' with blinkin' red an' gold, an' covered

with white beltin'. An' the inspection before you start wasn't no joke, I can tell you. Many's the weeks' pay I've 'ad stopped, all on account of Sunday mornin's. I'm a pretty good soldier on active service, sir—why, you seen me at Loos, didn't you?—but what I can't stick is all them barricks an' fatigues an' cleanin' ups.

"F'r a long time I used to say to myself, 'Brommit, my boy, you're a blasted idiot—I can understand a young rookie with only two or three years' service not managin' to get out of Church P'rade, but a soldier of fifteen years' standin' ought to know the tricks of the trade by this time. If *you* can't manage to stop quietly in bed on Sunday mornin's, you ain't worth yer service stripes,' I says.

"But the more I thought about it the more 'opeless it seemed. Our colonel was old W. J. Reid—Slippery Bill we used to call 'im, 'cos 'e was as slippery as a soapy plank! 'E *was* an old monkey-face, an' no mistake.

"One day I was called up to the orderly-room to sign somethin' or other, an' I sees a poster on the wall: 'Classification according to religions'—neat little chart it was: 'Church of England, so many—Presbyterians, so many—Catholics, so many.' You bet I didn't pay much attention to the numbers. Wot caught my eye was a column sayin', 'Wesleyans, None.' An' all of a sudden I saw my game.

"'Wesleyans, None.' So there wasn't even a bloomin' Wesleyan N.C.O. to take what Wesleyans there might be to chapel! Probably there wasn't even one bloomin' Wesleyan minister in the little Irish town where we was billeted. I saw myself at last stayin' in bed every blessed Sunday mornin'. At the very worst, if that there little religion 'ad a chapel, I'd be sent there on my own, and a detachment of one can always be

trusted to find its way about. Wesleyan—that was the winner.

"Still, I 'ad one anxiety to 'old me back: I didn't for the life of me know what that there fancy religion might be. I'm not exackly a pious bloke, but I'm a good Christian, an' I didn't want to make a damned idiot o' myself. Besides, it would probably be a serious matter, I thought, to change your religion in the army. P'r'aps I'd 'ave to see old Bill 'imself about it, an' Bill wasn't exactly one of them fellers you can take in with some 'arf-baked tale.

"It was no good trying to get to know anythink in barricks. I'd only 'ave attracted notice at an awkward moment. But I knew a girl in the town as knew people 'oo knowed, so I asked 'er to make inquiries.

"She gave me an A1 character. An' blowed if I 'adn't been an' found quite a decent religion; it suited me down to the ground. O' course you know 'oo Wesley was, sir? 'E was a feller as thought that bishops an' chaplains in 'is time didn't act accordin' to Scripture. 'E preached the return to poverty an' 'umbleness an' love of one's neighbour. You bet the Church of England couldn't swallow that! On the 'ole it was an 'onest kind of religion, an' a decent chap like me might very well 'ave gone in for it without its appearin' too out o' the way.

"Well, when I'd got myself well primed up about old Wesley, I felt as 'ow a little interview with Bill wasn't such a terrible thing after all. So I goes to see the sergeant-major, and tells 'im I wants to speak to the colonel.

" 'Wot about?' 'e asks.

" 'Strickly privit,' I says.

" 'E'd 'ave liked to 'ave got my story out o' me then an' there, 'e would, but I knew my only chance was to

take Bill off 'is guard, so I kep' the secret of my plan of attack.

" 'Well, Brommit,' says the old man quite pleasant like, 'have you got any complaint to make?'

" 'No complaints, sir,' says I; 'everything's O.K. But I've asked leave to speak to you, 'cos I wanted to tell you, sir, as 'ow I intend to change my religion.'

"I saw I'd got old Bill set for once, an' no mistake.

" 'Change your religion?' 'e says. 'Stuff and nonsense! Have you ever heard of such a thing, sergeant-major? What's your religion at present?'

" 'Church of England, sir; but I wish to be put down in future as Wesleyan.'

" 'Well, I'm——! Who on earth put that notion into your head, my man? Has the padre offended you, or what?'

" 'Oh no, sir, not at all; on the contrary, Mr. Morrison's always been very kind to me. No, it ain't that at all, sir; but I don't believe in the Church of England no more, that's all.'

" 'You don't believe any more . . . ? What don't you believe? What do *you* know about beliefs and dogmas?'

" 'Why, sir, lots o' things,' I says. 'F'r instance, there's the bishops; I don't 'old with their way of livin', sir.'

" 'By Jove, sergeant-major, do you hear this damned idiot? He doesn't hold with the bishops' way of living! May I ask, Brommit, where you have had occasion to observe the ways of bishops?'

" 'Well, sir, Wesley was a splendid fellow . . .' An' off I starts to spit out everythink my girl 'ad managed to get 'old of, without lettin' 'im put in a word. You bet 'e'd 'ad enough of it after five minutes. 'E'd 'ave liked to shut me up, but 'e couldn't do that without grantin' me wot I was askin' for. There was no flies

on *my* conversion, I can tell you; I 'ad real live scruples; I'd been thinkin' too much. You can't punish a chap becos 'e thinks too much.

"The old man knew 'is job as well as I knew mine. 'E saw at once 'e only 'ad one thing to do.

" 'All right,' 'e said. 'After all, it's your own affair, my man. Sergeant-major, put him down as a Wesleyan. Brommit, you will come back to my room on Friday evening, and meanwhile I will arrange matters with the Wesleyan minister so that you can attend the services. You know where he lives, of course?'

" 'No, sir, I don't know 'im.'

" 'That's rather strange. Well, never mind, I'll find him. Come back on Friday, Brommit.'

"Slippery old Bill! 'E knew a thing or two, 'e did! Next Friday evenin', when I went up to 'im, 'e says:

" 'Ah! I've settled everything,' says 'e. 'I saw the Wesleyan minister, the Reverend Mr. Short. A charming man, Mr. Short. It's settled with him that you're to go to chapel on Sunday mornings at nine and on Sunday evenings at six. Yes, there are two services; Wesleyans are very strict. Of course if by any chance you miss a service, Mr. Short is sure to let me know, and I would take the necessary steps. But there's no need to think of that, is there? A man who takes the trouble to change his religion at the age of thirty is hardly likely to miss a service. So that's all right, Brommit.'

"Oh, damn cute 'e was, was Slippery Bill! Next Sunday off I goes to the Reverend Short's chapel. Tall, lean chap 'e was, with a real wicked face. 'E gave us an awful sermon all about 'ow we were to reform our lives, an' about all the things we was to renounce in this world, an' about the 'orrible fire as was awaitin' us in the next if we didn't follow 'is advice. After the service Mr. Short comes up to me an' asks me to stay

on after the others. Blowed if 'e didn't keep me till twelve o'clock jawin' me about the dooties my noo faith brought me an' about wot I read an' 'oo I talked to. By the time I got away from 'im I was 'arf stunned; an' I 'ad to go again in the evenin'!

"Every blinkin' Sunday the same thing 'appened. I used to spend the 'ole week swearing' and sendin' Short an' Wesley to the 'ottest place in the world. Once I tried on not goin' to chapel; but the miserable old 'ound split on me to the colonel, an' I 'ad a week's pay stopped. Then that there blessed Congregation invented Friday evenin' lectures; and the converted soldier, sent by kind permission of the colonel, was the finest ornament they 'ad.

"Well, wot put an end to my patience was a month later, when Short 'ad the cheek to jaw me personally about the girl I was walkin' out with. I went clean mad then, an' was ready for anythink, even for 'avin' it out again with Bill, rather than put up with that maniac's talk.

" 'Please, sir,' I tells the colonel, 'I'm sorry to trouble you again with my religion, but this 'ere Wesleyanism don't satisfy me at all. It ain't a bit wot I'd 'oped for.'

"I expected to get jolly well strafed, but I didn't. Bill just looked at me with a smile.

" 'That's all right, Brommit,' 'e said; 'the Government pays me for looking after the moral health of my men. And may I inquire what religion is at present enjoying the favour of your approval?

" 'Well, sir, I don't see none at all. I've made myself a sort o' religion o' my own—if you'll allow it, of course.'

" 'I? Why, it's none of *my* business, Brommit. On the contrary, I admire the vitality of your mind. You've evidently got beliefs of your own; that's a very good sign indeed. It's just that they will not admit the

obligation of going to a place of public worship on a Sunday, that's all. I presume I am taking you correctly?'

" 'Yes, sir, quite correctly.'

" 'What an admirable coincidence, Brommit! For a long time I've been looking for somebody to scrub the stairs thoroughly on Sundays, while the men are at church. Sergeant-major, put Brommit down as an Agnostic—on permanent fatigue for scrubbing the stairs on Sunday mornings.' "

LITTLE HERR FRIEDEMANN

By Thomas Mann

IT was the fault of the wet-nurse. What was the good of Frau Consul Friedemann's giving her an earnest talking-to, when her suspicions were first aroused, and bidding her suppress that vice of hers? What was the good of giving her a daily glass of claret in addition to the nourishing beer? It was suddenly evident that this young woman also went so far as to drink the spirits intended for the cooking-stove, and before a substitute for her had arrived, before one could discharge her, the disaster had happened. One day when the mother and her three half-grown daughters returned from a walk, little Johannes, about a month old, lay on the floor, whimpering lightly yet frightfully, just as he had fallen from the swaddling-table, while the wet-nurse stood staring stupidly.

The doctor, who tested the limbs of the contorted and jerking little body with firm, solicitous fingers, made a very, very serious face; the three girls stood sobbing in a corner and Frau Friedemann prayed aloud in the terror of her heart.

Even before the birth of the child the poor woman

had been forced to undergo having her husband, the consul for the Netherlands, swept from her side by an illness as sudden as it was violent, and she was still too broken in spirit to be capable of hoping that little Johannes might be preserved to her. But after two days the physician, with an encouraging pressure of the hand, told her that an immediate danger was no longer to be feared; the slight concussion of the brain had, first of all, entirely disappeared, as one might see by the mere look of the eyes, which no longer had the same fixity as at the beginning. Of course, one would have to wait to know how, after all, the thing would develop—and, to be sure, to hope for the best, to hope for the best.

The grey house with the gables in which Johannes Friedemann grew up stood near the northern gates of the old mercantile city, a city of medium size. Through the house door one entered a roomy vestibule, paved with stone tiles, from which a staircase with white-painted banister led to the upper stories. The wall-paper of the living-room in the first story revealed faded landscapes, and stiff-backed furniture stood ranged around the heavy mahogany table with the dark-red cover of plush.

Here he often sat during his childhood, at the window, in front of which beautiful flowers were always growing—sat on a little stool at the feet of his mother and listened to some wonderful story while he regarded the smooth, grey parting of her hair and her kind, gentle face and breathed the slight fragrance that always emanated from her. Or perhaps he would ask to see the picture of his father, a pleasant-looking gentleman with grey side-whiskers. He was in heaven, said his mother, and was awaiting them all there.

Behind the house there was a small garden, in which

they spent a good part of the day during the summer, in spite of the sweetish vapours which were almost always being wafted across it from a neighbouring sugar-refinery. An old, gnarled walnut-tree grew there, and often little Johannes sat in its shade on a low wooden stool and cracked nuts, while Frau Friedemann and the three sisters, who were now grown up, sat together in a tent of grey canvas. The eyes of the mother often lifted themselves from her embroidery and wandered across to the child with pathetic tenderness.

He was not a beautiful child, little Johannes; and as he sat there on his stool with his pointed pigeon-breast, his hunched-up back, and his all too long, skinny arms, and cracked nuts with a great zest, he offered a most remarkable spectacle. His hands and feet, however, were small and delicate, and he had large, light-brown eyes, like those of a doe, a soft, well-cut mouth, and fine, light-brown hair. Although his head sat so lamentably between his shoulders, yet he was almost to be called beautiful.

When he was seven years old, he was sent to school, and now the years went by swiftly and uniformly. Day by day, with that comically dignified manner of walking which is often a characteristic of the deformed, he would wander between the gabled houses and the shops to the old schoolhouse with the Gothic vaults; and when he had done his work at home, he would perhaps read in his books, with the lovely, coloured pictures on the covers, or occupy himself in the garden, while the sisters would tend house for the ailing mother. They also went to parties, for the Friedemanns belonged to the first families of the town; but the girls had unfortunately not yet married, for their fortune was not very large and they were rather plain-looking.

Johannes, to be sure, also received an invitation now and then from his companions of the same age, but he had no great pleasure in associating with them. He could not take part in their games, and as they always maintained a shy restraint towards him, comradeship was impossible.

There came the time when in the school-yard he would often hear them talk of certain experiences; he would listen with wide and attentive eyes as they spoke of their ardour for this or that little girl, and would remain silent. These things, which obviously absorbed the others so completely, belonged to those for which he was not suited, like gymnastics and ball-throwing. Often this made him a bit sad; but, after all, he had always been accustomed to stand by himself and not to partake of the interests of the others.

In spite of this it happened—he was sixteen years old at the time—that he conceived a sudden inclination for a girl of the same age. She was the sister of one of his class-mates, a blonde, wayward, merry creature, and he had become acquainted with her at her brother's. He was seized by a strange awkwardness in her presence, and the self-conscious and artificially friendly manner with which she, too, treated him filled him with deep sadness.

One summer afternoon as he was walking alone upon the ramparts that lay beyond the town gates, he heard a whispering behind a bush of jasmine and peered cautiously between the branches. On the bench which stood there sat that identical girl and beside her a tall, red-haired boy whom he knew very well; he had his arm about her waist and was pressing upon her lips a kiss, which she returned, tittering. When Johannes Friedemann had seen this, he turned on his heels and went softly away.

His head sat deeper than ever between his shoulders, his hands trembled, and a sharp, insistent pain mounted from his breast into his throat. But he choked it down and carried himself resolutely erect, as well as he could. "Very well," he said to himself, "that is the end of that. I'll never again trouble myself about all this. It brings joy and happiness to others, but to me always only pain and sorrow. I am done with it. It is all over for me. Never again."

This resolution did him good. He renounced, renounced for ever. He went home and took up a book or played the violin, as he had learned to do in spite of his deformed breast.

When he was seventeen, he left school, in order to enter business life, as was the universal custom in that world of his. He obtained a position as an apprentice in the great lumber firm of Schlievogt and Company, down along the river. He was treated with consideration; he, on his part, was friendly and obliging; and so the time passed peacefully and all was in good order. In his twenty-first year his mother died after a long illness.

This was a great sorrow for Johannes Friedemann, a sorrow which he retained for a long time. He enjoyed this sorrow, he abandoned himself to it, just as one abandons oneself to a great happiness; he cultivated it with a thousand childhood memories and exploited it as his first deep experience.

Is not life in itself something good, whether or not it takes that form which one calls "happy"? Johannes Friedemann felt that and he loved life. No one can realize with what circumspection he, who had renounced the greatest happiness which life can offer us, knew how to enjoy the pleasures which lay open to him. A walk in springtime through the park that surrounded

the town, the perfume of a flower, the song of a bird—might one not be thankful for such things?

And that a cultivated mind belongs to the capacity for enjoyment—yes, that a cultivated mind is always only the same thing as the capacity for enjoyment—that, too, he understood; and he cultivated himself. He loved music and went to all the concerts given in the town. Gradually he himself began to play the violin passably well, though he looked queer enough while playing, and he rejoiced in every soft and beautiful tone that he succeeded in producing. By constant reading he had also acquired a literary taste, which, no doubt, he shared with no one else in that town. He was well informed as to the latest books both at home and in foreign lands; he knew how to savour the rhythmic charm of a poem, knew how to let the intimate spirit of an exquisitely written short story work on him—oh! one might almost say that he was an epicurean.

He learned to comprehend that all things are worthy of enjoyment and that it is almost foolish to distinguish between happy and unhappy experiences. He accepted willingly all his feelings and moods and cultivated them, the sombre as well as the gay, and no less the wishes unfulfilled—his longings. He loved them for their own sakes and told himself that the best was lost through fulfilment. Is not the sweet, poignant, vague yearning and hoping of quiet evenings in spring more enjoyable than all the fulfilment which summer is able to bring?—Yes, he was an epicurean, was little Herr Friedemann!

Surely the people who greeted him on the streets in that compassionate, friendly manner to which he had become accustomed of old, did not know this. They did not know that this unfortunate cripple who marched through the streets full of droll dignity in his light-

coloured overcoat and polished silk hat—he was, strangely enough, a bit vain—tenderly loved the life which flowed gently past him, void of great passion, but filled with a quiet and tender happiness which he knew how to create for himself.

The chief hobby of Herr Friedemann, however, his actual passion, was the theatre. He possessed an uncommonly strong dramatic sensibility, and before powerful stage effects, or at the climax of a tragedy, his whole little body might begin to tremble. He had his special seat in the dress-circle of the municipal theatre, where he was to be seen regularly, and now and then his three sisters accompanied him. Since the death of their mother they kept house for him and themselves in the old home, which they owned in common.

Unluckily they were still not married; but they had long ago reached an age at which one becomes resigned, for Friederike, the oldest, was seventeen years older than Herr Friedemann. She and her sister Henriette were a trifle too tall and thin, while Pfiffi, the youngest, seemed far too short and stout. The last-named, moreover, had a droll trick of shaking herself at every word and then accumulating moisture in the corners of her mouth.

Little Herr Friedemann did not bother much about the three girls; but they kept faithfully together and were constantly of one mind. Especially when some engagement in their circle of acquaintances was announced, they would unanimously declare that this was really *most* delightful.

Their brother continued to live with them, even after he had left the timber firm of Schlievogt and Company and had gone into business by himself. He took over some small enterprise, an agency or the like, something

that did not demand too much work. He used a few rooms on the ground-floor of the house, so that he only needed to climb the stairs to meals, for now and then he suffered a bit from asthma.

On his thirtieth birthday, a bright, warm June day, he sat in the grey garden-tent after lunch, with a new bolster, which Henriette had worked for him, behind his neck, a good cigar in his mouth, and a good book in his hand. Now and again he would put the book aside and listen to the joyous twittering of the sparrows which sat in the old nut-tree and gaze at the neat gravel-path that led to the house, and at the lawn, with the bright flower-beds.

Little Herr Friedemann did not wear a beard, and his face had practically not changed at all; only the features had become a bit more pointed. His fine, light-brown hair he wore parted smoothly on the side.

Once as he let the book sink to his knees and blinked his eyes towards the blue, sunny heavens, he said to himself: "It's now thirty years. Now there will be perhaps another ten or even twenty. God knows. They will come quietly and silently and go by like those that are past, and I shall await them in tranquillity of soul."

In July of the same year that change in the post of commandant of the district took place which set that entire world agog. The portly, jovial gentleman who had occupied this post for long years had been a great favourite in social circles, and his departure was viewed with regret. God knows to what circumstance it was due that now Herr von Rinnlingen should have come here from the capital.

The exchange, moreover, did not seem to be a bad one, for the new Lieutenant-Colonel, who was married, but childless, rented a very roomy villa in the southern

suburbs, and this led people to believe that he was planning receptions and the like. At all events the rumour that he was extraordinarily affluent was substantiated by the fact that he brought four servants, five saddle- and carriage-horses, a landau, and a light trap with him.

This couple soon after their arrival began to pay calls on the most esteemed families, and their name was on all lips; but it was decidedly not Herr von Rinnlingen himself who aroused the most interest, but his wife. The men were staggered and for the present ventured no opinion, but the women were frank enough to show that they did not approve of the ways and nature of Gerda von Rinnlingen.

"It is natural that one should sense the air of the capital," asserted Frau Hagenström, the wife of the attorney, speaking to Henriette Friedemann, "quite natural. She smokes, she rides—no matter! But her conduct is not only free; it is loud, and even that is not the right word. You see, she is by no means ugly, one might even say that she was pretty; and yet she is quite devoid of feminine charm, and her look, her laugh, her movements, lack everything that men admire. She is not coquettish, and I, God knows, would be the last to disapprove of that; but is it right for such a young woman—she is twenty-four years old—to sacrifice completely all the natural, pretty powers of attraction? I am not very ready of speech, my dear, but I know what I mean. Our men are still, as it were, stunned. You will see that in a few weeks they will turn away from her completely disgusted."

"Well," said Fräulein Friedemann, "she is excellently provided for."

"Yes, her husband!" cried Frau Hagenström. "How does she treat him? You will see! I should be the first to insist that a married woman should to a certain

degree be reserved towards the other sex. But how does she act towards her own husband? She has a way of giving him an ice-cold look and in a tone of pity saying: 'Dear friend' to him, that arouses my indignation. For you ought to see *him*—correct, a fine figure of a man, courteous, a splendidly preserved man in the forties, a brilliant officer! They have been married four years, my dear."

The spot in which little Herr Friedemann was to be vouchsafed to cast eyes upon Frau von Rinnlingen for the first time was the Hauptstrasse, which consisted almost exclusively of business houses, and this meeting took place at noon, just as he came from the Exchange, where he had joined in a conversation or two.

He was walking, tiny yet important, at the side of Herr Stephens, a wholesale merchant, an uncommonly large and bulky gentleman with round-trimmed side-whiskers and terribly thick eyebrows. Both wore top hats and because of the warm weather had opened their overcoats. They talked of politics, striking their walking-sticks rhythmically on the pavement; but when they had about reached the middle of the street, Herr Stephens, the wholesale merchant, suddenly said: "Devil take me, if there isn't the Von Rinnlingen driving towards us."

"Well met, now," said Herr Friedemann in his high, somewhat sharp voice and he looked expectantly straight ahead. "I have really not had a look at her yet. There we have the yellow wagon."

It was indeed the yellow hunting-trap, which Frau von Rinnlingen was using today, and she drove the two slender horses herself, while the footman, with crossed arms, sat behind her. She wore a wide jacket, very light in colour, and the skirt was also light. Her ruddy blond hair spread out from under the little round

straw-hat with brown leather band, and was curled over her ears and fell in a thick knot on her neck. The colour of her oval face was a dull white, and in the corners of her brown eyes, which lay unusually close together, there were bluish shadows. Her short but well-shaped nose was saddled with freckles, which were very becoming to her; but one could not see whether her mouth was pretty or not, for she constantly thrust out her under lip and then drew it back, rubbing it against the upper lip.

Stephens, the wholesale merchant, greeted her with extraordinary deference as the wagon reached them, and little Herr Friedemann also lifted his hat, looking at Frau von Rinnlingen with wide and attentive eyes. She lowered her whip, nodded her head slightly, and drove slowly past, looking to right and left at the houses and shop-windows.

After a few steps the wholesale merchant said: "She has been out driving and is now on the way home."

Little Herr Friedemann did not reply, but looked down at the pavement before him. Then suddenly he looked up at the wholesale merchant and asked: "What did you say?"

And Herr Stephens repeated his sagacious remark.

Three days later at noon Johannes Friedemann returned home from his regular walk. Lunch took place at half past twelve and he was just about to go for half an hour to his "office," which was situated immediately to the right of the entrance door, when the servant-girl came across the entrance hall and said to him: "There are visitors here, Herr Friedemann."

"In the office?" he asked.

"No, upstairs, with the ladies."

"Who is it?"

"Lieutenant-Colonel and Frau von Rinnlingen."

"Oh," said Herr Friedemann, "then I will—"

And he ascended the stairs. On the second floor he walked across the hallway and he already had in his hand the knob of the lofty, white-painted door which opened into the "landscape room" when he suddenly halted, retreated a step, turned about, and went slowly back as he had come. And although he was completely alone, he said to himself, aloud: "No. Better not."

He went downstairs to his "office," sat down at the desk, and took up the newspaper. After a minute or so, however, he let it drop and looked sideways out of the window. He remained seated so until the girl came and told him that lunch was served; he then went up to the dining-room, where his sisters were already waiting for him, and sat down on his chair, on which three music-books were lying.

Henriette, who served the soup, said: "Johannes, guess who was here!"

"Well?" he asked.

"The new Lieutenant-Colonel and his wife."

"Really? Well, that was nice."

"Yes," said Pfiffi, and the corners of her mouth began to water; "I find that they are both most agreeable persons."

"At all events," said Friederike, "we mustn't wait too long with our return call. I suggest that we go the day after tomorrow, Sunday."

"Sunday," said Henriette and Pfiffi.

"And, Johannes, you'll come with us, of course?" asked Friederike.

"I should say so!" said Pfiffi and she shook herself. Herr Friedemann had utterly failed to hear the question and ate his soup with a quiet and timorous mien. It was as though he were listening to something, to some strange sound.

On the following evening *Lohengrin* was on the boards at the municipal theatre and all the best people were present. The little auditorium was packed from top to bottom and filled with buzzing noises, a smell of gas, and perfumes. But all opera-glasses, in the orchestra seats as well as those in the balconies, were directed at box thirteen, just to the right of the stage, for there for the first time Herr von Rinnlingen and wife had made their appearance, and this was an opportunity, for once, to study the couple thoroughly.

When little Herr Friedemann, in an immaculate dress-suit, with a shining white shirt-bosom projecting pointedly, entered his box—box thirteen—he started back, at the same time making a movement with his hand towards his forehead, while his nostrils expanded convulsively for a moment. But then he sat down on his chair, the seat to the left of Frau von Rinnlingen.

She looked at him a moment as he sat down, protruding her under lip, and then turned to exchange a few words with her husband, who stood behind her. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man with turned-up moustaches and a bronzed, good-natured face.

When the overture began and Frau von Rinnlingen leaned over the railing, Herr Friedemann shot a hasty side-glance at her. She wore a light-coloured evening dress and was even a trifle *décolleté*—the only one among the ladies present. Her sleeves were very wide and puffy, and her white gloves reached to her elbows. There was something voluptuous about her figure to-night, something that was not noticeable the other day, when she wore the wide jacket; her full bosom rose and sank slowly and the coils of ruddy-blond hair lay low and heavy upon her neck.

Herr Friedemann was pale, much paler than usual, and beneath his smoothly parted brown hair small beads of perspiration stood on his forehead. Frau von

Rinnlingen had stripped her glove from her left arm, which lay on the red velvet of the balustrade, and this round, dull-white arm, which like the unadorned hand was traversed by pale-blue veins, he saw always before him; there was no help for that.

The fiddles sang, the trumpets came in crashingly, Telramund fell, general jubilation reigned in the orchestra, and little Herr Friedemann sat immovably, pale and still, his head sunk deep between his shoulders, a forefinger pressed to his lips and his other hand under the lapel of his coat.

When the curtain fell, Frau von Rinnlingen rose and left the box with her husband. Herr Friedemann saw this without looking in that direction, passed his handkerchief lightly across his forehead, stood up suddenly, walked as far as the door leading to the corridor, turned back again, sat down in his place, and remained there motionless in the position which he had assumed before.

When the signal bell tinkled and his neighbours came back, he felt that Frau von Rinnlingen's eyes rested on him, and without really willing it he raised his head. As their glances met, she did not by any means look aside, but continued to regard him attentively without a trace of embarrassment, until he himself, conquered and humiliated, lowered his eyes. He had grown still paler, and a strange, sweetish, biting anger began to rise in him.—The music began.

Towards the end of this act it happened that Frau von Rinnlingen let her fan slip from her hand and that this fell to the floor beside Herr Friedemann. Both bent down at the same time, but she seized it herself and said with a smile which had mockery in it: "I thank you."

Their heads had been close together and for a moment he had been forced to breathe the warm perfume

of her breast. His face was distorted, his whole body contracted, and his heart pounded with such horribly heavy and powerful beats that his breath almost left him. He sat for another half-minute; then he pushed back his chair, stood up noiselessly, and noiselessly went out.

He walked, followed by the strains of the music, across the corridor, received his silk hat, his light overcoat, and his cane at the coat-room, and strode down the steps to the street.

It was a warm, still evening. In the light of the gas lamps the grey, gabled houses stood silently against the heavens, which were glistening with bright, mild stars. The steps of the few people who passed Herr Friedemann echoed upon the pavement. Somebody greeted him, but he did not see it; he held his head low, and his high, pointed chest trembled, so heavily did he breathe. Now and then he said to himself softly: "My God! My God!"

He looked into his heart with horror-stricken and anxious eyes, and saw how his emotions, which he had cultivated so tenderly, had always treated so mildly and wisely, were now torn up, whirled about, twisted inside out.—And suddenly, quite overpowered, in a condition of dizziness, intoxication, longing, and torture, he leaned against a lamp-post and with trembling lips whispered: "Gerda!"

Everything remained quiet. Far and wide at this moment there was no human being to be seen. Little Herr Friedemann pulled himself together and walked on. He had gone along the street in which the theatre stood and which pitched rather steeply towards the river, and now he followed the Hauptstrasse towards the north, towards his home.

How she had looked at him! How? She had con-

quered him, forced him to lower his eyes? She had humiliated him with a look? Was she not a woman and he a man? And had not her remarkable brown eyes really trembled for joy during all this?

Once again he felt this impotent, almost voluptuous hatred rise within him, but then he thought of the moment when her head had touched his own, when he had breathed the fragrance of her body, and he stood still for the second time, bent back his deformed chest and shoulders, drew his breath through his teeth, and then murmured once more, utterly bewildered, despairing, beyond himself: "My God! My God!"

And again he strode mechanically on, slowly, through the sultry evening air, through the empty, echoing streets, until he stood in front of his house. He stood still a moment in the hall and drew in the cool, cellar-like smell that prevailed there; then he entered his "office."

He sat down at the writing-desk by the open window and stared straight before him at a large, yellow rose, which someone had put there for him in a glass of water. He took it and breathed in its fragrance with closed eyes; but then with a weary and disconsolate gesture he pushed it aside. No, no, that was over! What was such fragrance to him now? What were all those things to him which up to the present had meant his "happiness"?

He turned aside and looked out at the quiet street. Now and again footsteps resounded and echoed past. The stars stood overhead and twinkled. How deathly tired and weak he had grown! His head seemed so empty and his despair began to dissolve into a great, gentle melancholy. A few lines of poetry swept through his memory, the music of *Lohengrin* rang again in his ears, once again he saw Frau von Rinnlingen's figure before him, her white arm upon the

red velvet, and then he fell into a heavy, deep, feverish sleep.

He was often close to waking, but he feared this and each time sank anew into unconsciousness. Then, after it had grown quite light, he opened his eyes and looked about him with large, sorrowful eyes. All things stood clear to his soul; it seemed as though his suffering had not been interrupted at all by sleep.

His head felt dull and his eyes burned; but after he had washed himself and wet his forehead with eau-de-Cologne, he felt better and sat down again quietly in his chair by the window, which had remained open. It was still very early in the morning, about five o'clock. Now and again a baker's boy went by; otherwise not a soul was to be seen. All the jalousies opposite were still down. But the birds were twittering and the sky was luminous and blue. It was a beautiful Sunday morning.

A feeling of comfort and confidence overcame little Herr Friedemann. Of what was he afraid? Were not all things as usual? Granted that he had had a bad attack yesterday; well, that was to be the end of it! It was not too late yet, he could still escape perdition! He must avoid every occasion that might renew the attack; he felt that he was strong enough for this. He felt that he had the strength to overcome it and to smother it wholly in his breast.

When the clock struck half past seven, Friederike entered and set the coffee-tray on the round table which stood in front of the leather sofa at the back of the room.

"Good-morning, Johannes," said she, "here is your breakfast."

"Thanks," said Herr Friedemann. And then: "Dear Friederike, I'm sorry that you will have to pay

that call alone. I don't feel quite well enough to be able to go with you. I have slept badly, have a headache—in short, I must ask you—"

Frederike replied: "That is too bad. You can't entirely refrain from paying this call. But you really do look ill. Shall I lend you my menthol pencil?"

"Thanks," said Herr Friedemann. "It will pass." And Friederike went out.

Standing at the table, he drank his coffee slowly and ate a small *croissant*. He was satisfied with himself and proud of his determination. When he was done, he took a cigar and sat down once more at the window. Breakfast had done him good and he felt happy and full of hope. He took up a book, read, smoked, and with blinking eyes looked out into the sunlight.

The street had now grown lively; a rattling of wagons, talk, and the tinkling of a horse-car sounded in his ears; but the twittering of birds was to be heard over all, and a warm, soft air was wafted from the gleaming blue sky.

At ten o'clock he heard the sisters crossing the hall, heard the entrance door creak, and saw the three ladies pass in front of the window, without paying any attention to it. An hour went by; he felt happier and happier.

A kind of excessive courage began to inspire him. What wonderful air, and how the birds twittered! How would it be if he took a short walk?—And then, suddenly, without any connecting idea, arose the sweet yet terrifying thought: "What if I went to her?"—And then, after he had suppressed by means of an actual muscular exertion all that arose in him of anxious warning, he added with a serene determination: "I'll go to her!"

And he donned his black Sunday suit, took his silk

hat and cane, and walked quickly, and breathing hurriedly, through the entire town to the southern suburbs. Without looking at a single person, at every step he raised and lowered his head earnestly, utterly rapt in a state of forgetfulness and exaltation, until he stood in the chestnut avenue in front of the red villa at the entrance of which the name "Lieutenant-Colonel von Rinnlingen" was to be read.

Here a trembling overcame him, and his heart beat hard and convulsively against his breast. But he entered the vestibule and rang the bell inside. The die was now cast and there was no going back. "Let all things take their course," he thought. Everything within him was now as still as death.

The door sprang open; the footman came towards him across the ante-room, took his card, and hastened up the stairs, on which lay a red carpet. Herr Friedemann stared at this immovably until the servant came back and said the *"gnädige Frau"* begged him to come up.

Upstairs, close to the door of the drawing-room, where he left his cane, he cast a glance into the mirror. His face was pale, and above his reddened eyes his hair stuck to his forehead; the hand which held his silk hat trembled without his being able to stop it.

The servant opened the door and he entered. He found himself in a rather large, half-dark room; the shades of the windows were drawn. To the right stood a grand piano, and in the centre, about the round table, were grouped arm-chairs upholstered in brown silk. Over the sofa, on the wall to the left, hung a landscape in a heavy gold frame. The wall-paper, too, was dark. Palms stood in a bay-window in the background.

A minute went by; then Frau von Rinnlingen drew aside the portières to the right and came towards him

soundlessly on the thick brown carpet. She wore a very simple red-and-black-checked dress. A shaft of sunlight fell into the room from the bay-window, and in this the motes danced. It caught her heavy reddish hair so that for a moment it gleamed like gold. She kept her remarkable eyes directed on him searchingly, and as usual thrust out her under lip.

"Gnädige Frau," began Herr Friedemann, and looked up at her, for he reached only to her breast, "I too should like to pay you my respects. When you honoured my sisters with your call, I was, unfortunately, absent and—greatly regretted this—"

He really had nothing more to say, but she stood and looked at him remorselessly, as though she wished to force him to speak further. His blood rushed suddenly to his head. "She wishes to torture and mock me!" he thought, "and she sees through me! How her eyes quiver!"

Finally, in a very clear and very light voice, she said: "It is very kind of you to come. I too regretted not meeting you the other day. Will you please take a seat?"

She sat down close to him, laid her arms upon the arm-rests of the chair, and leaned back. He sat bent forward and held his hat between his knees.

She went on: "Do you know that your sisters were here a quarter of an hour ago? They told me you were ill."

"That is true," replied Herr Friedemann, "I didn't feel well this morning. I didn't think I should be able to go out. I beg you to excuse my being late."

"You don't appear in good health even now," she said very quietly, and looked him full in the face. "You are pale and your eyes are inflamed. Isn't your health generally good?"

"Oh—" stammered Herr Friedemann, "I am, in general, quite satisfied."

"I too am ill a good deal," she continued, without turning her eyes from him; "but nobody notices it. I am nervous and subject to the most remarkable conditions."

She ceased, inclined her chin upon her breast, and looked at him expectantly with upraised eyes. But he did not answer. He sat still and kept his eyes fixed upon her with a wide and thoughtful gaze. How strangely she spoke and how her light, uncontrolled voice moved him! His heart had grown quieter; it was as if he dreamed.

Frau von Rinnlingen began anew: "I am surely not mistaken—but didn't you leave the theatre yesterday before the close of the performance?"

"Yes, *gnädige Frau.*"

"I was sorry for that. You were a most reverent neighbour, even though the performance was not good, or only relatively good. You love music? Do you play the piano?"

"I play the violin a little," said Herr Friedemann. "That is to say—it is almost none at all—"

"You play the violin?" she asked; then she looked abstractedly past him, and considered. Suddenly she said: "Why, we might play together now and then. I can accompany a bit. I should be glad to find someone here.—Would you come?"

"I should be glad to be of service to you," he replied, still as in a dream. A pause ensued. Then suddenly the expression of her face changed. He saw how it became distorted with a scarcely perceptible expression of pitiless mockery, how her eyes were again turned upon him, steadfastly and searchingly, as twice before, with that strange, mysterious quivering. His face grew fiery red; and without knowing where he should

turn, completely flustered and beside himself, he let his head sink between his shoulders and looked down at the carpet, utterly lost. Like a short shudder that impotent, sweet, poignant fury went through him.

As he raised his eyes again with a desperate resolve, she refrained from looking at him, but directed her eyes over his head towards the door. Laboriously he brought forth a few words: "And are you at least in some way content with your sojourn in our city?"

"Oh," said Frau von Rinnlingen indifferently, "certainly. Why should I not be content? Of course I feel a bit narrowed here, a bit watched, but—moreover," she went on rapidly, "before I forget it—we expect to have a few people here within the next few days, a small, informal company. We could make a bit of music, chat a bit.—Then there is a very pretty garden behind the house; it extends down to the stream. In short, you and your ladies will, of course, receive an invitation, but I should like to ask you at once; will you give us the pleasure?"

Herr Friedemann had scarcely uttered his thanks and his acceptance when the door-handle was pressed down with energy and the Lieutenant-Colonel entered. Both rose, and while Frau von Rinnlingen introduced the gentlemen to each other, her husband bowed to Herr Friedemann and to her with equal courtesy. His brown face was quite suffused with warmth.

While drawing off his gloves, he said something to Herr Friedemann in his strong and incisive voice and Herr Friedemann looked up at him with his large, expressionless eyes and half expected to be kindlily patted on the shoulder. Then with heels drawn together and the upper part of his body slightly bent forward the Lieutenant-Colonel turned to his wife and said, with perceptibly softened voice: "Have you asked Herr Friedemann for the pleasure of his company at

our little reception, my dear? If it is agreeable to you, I think we might have it in about a week. I hope that the weather will continue good and that we can make use of the garden."

"As you think best," said Frau von Rinnlingen and looked straight past him.

Two minutes later Herr Friedemann bade them good-bye. As he bowed once more at the threshold, he met their eyes, which rested upon him without any expression.

He went away, but not back to town; involuntarily he chose a way which branched off from the avenue and led to the former ramparts along the river. There were well-tended lawns there, shady paths, and benches.

He walked quickly and unconsciously, without looking up. He was unbearably hot, and he felt the fires within him rise and fall, and a merciless throbbing in his weary head.

Were not her eyes still resting upon him? Not as when he left, however, empty and void of expression, but as before, with that trembling cruelty, as when she had spoken to him in that strange, quiet manner? Oh, did it delight her to render him helpless and to put him beside himself? Even though she saw through him, might she not have a bit of pity for him?

He had walked below, along the river, close to the green grass-covered bastions, and he sat down on a bench which was surrounded by jasmine-bushes in a half-circle. Everything about him was full of a sweet, sultry fragrance. In front of him the sun brooded upon the trembling water.

How tired and exhausted he felt, and yet how all things were in tortured revolt within him! Would it not be best to look about him once more and then go down into the still water, after a brief pang to be

freed, rescued unto a deep rest? Ah, rest, rest it was that he yearned for! Not rest within a void and unhearing nothingness, however, but a peace lighted by a soft and gentle sun, filled by sweet, quiet thoughts.

His entire tender love of life thrilled through him at this moment, and a deep longing for his lost happiness. But then he looked about him into the silent, eternal, indifferent peace of nature, saw how the river pursued its course in the sun, how the grass moved tremblingly and the flowers stood where they had blossomed, in order then to wither and decay, saw how all things, all things, were bound to destiny with this dumb surrender—and then suddenly he was overcome by a feeling of friendliness and acquiescence in the necessity which was able to give man a kind of superiority over all fate.

He thought of that afternoon on his thirtieth birthday, when, happy in the possession of content, he had believed he was able to survey the rest of his life without fear or hope. He had seen neither light nor shadow then, but everything had lain before him in a mild twilight, until far below him it merged, almost imperceptibly, into the dark, and he had contemplated the years that were still to come with a quiet and superior smile—how long ago was that?

And then this woman had come, she was bound to come, it was his fate, she herself was his fate, she alone! Had he not felt this from the very first moment? She had come, and though he had striven to defend his peace—all the forces within him were bound to rise in revolt for her, all that from youth onward he had suppressed in himself because he felt that it would mean ruin and torment to him—this had seized him with a terrible, irresistible power and was bringing him to ruin!

It was bringing him to ruin—he felt that. But why

struggle and torture himself? Let everything take its course! He would go his way and close his eyes to the yawning abyss behind there, obedient to fate, obedient to the puissant, poignant, sweet power that no one could elude.

The water glistened, the jasmine breathed forth its keen, sultry fragrance, the birds twittered everywhere about him in the trees, between which shone a heavy, velvety blue sky. But little hunch-backed Herr Friedemann continued to sit for a long time upon his bench. He sat bending forward, his forehead propped in both hands.

All were agreed that this affair at Rinnlingen's was most enjoyable. Some thirty persons sat at the long, tastefully decorated table which extended through the wide dining-room; the footman and two servants were already hurrying about with the ices; there was a clinking, a clattering, and a warm odour of food and perfume. Affable wholesale merchants with their wives and daughters were assembled here; in addition almost all the officers of the garrison, an old, beloved physician, a few lawyers, and such others as belonged to the best circles. A student of mathematics was also present, a nephew of the Lieutenant-Colonel, who was on a visit to his relations; he carried on the most abstruse conversations with Fräulein Hagenström, who sat opposite Herr Friedemann.

He himself sat on a beautiful velvet cushion at the lower end of the table, next to the unbeautiful wife of the headmaster of the school, not far from Frau von Rinnlingen, who had been escorted to the table by Consul Stephens. It was surprising what a change had taken place in little Herr Friedemann during the last week. It was, perhaps, the fault of the whitish incandescent gas-light which flooded the room that his

face appeared so terribly pale; but his cheeks had sunken in, his eyes, reddened and surrounded by dark shadows, revealed an unutterably sad glimmer, and it seemed as though his figure was more deformed than ever.—He drank a good deal of wine and now and then spoke a few words to his table-companion.

Frau von Rinnlingen had as yet exchanged not a single word with Herr Friedemann at table; now she bent forward a little and called to him: "I waited for you in vain these days, for you and your fiddle."

He looked at her a moment in complete absence of mind before he answered. She wore a light-coloured, airy costume which exposed her white throat, and a Maréchal Niel rose in full flower was fastened in her bright hair. Her cheeks this evening were a trifle flushed, but as usual blue shadows lay in the corners of her eyes.

Herr Friedemann looked down on his plate and produced some kind of answer, whereupon he was obliged to reply to a question of the headmaster's wife, whether he loved Beethoven. At this moment, however, the Lieutenant-Colonel, who sat at the upper end of the table, caught his wife's eye, tapped on his glass, and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I suggest that we take our coffee in the other rooms; and then the garden tonight must be not at all bad, and if anyone wishes to draw a breath of fresh air there, I am with him."

In the silence which ensued Lieutenant von Deidesheim tactfully made a witty remark, so that everybody rose amid merry laughter. Herr Friedemann was one of the last to leave the room with his lady; he led her through the Old German room, in which the men were beginning to smoke, into the half-dark and comfortable living-room, and left her.

He was dressed with great care; his coat was faultless, his shirt immaculately white; and his small and

well-shaped feet were covered by patent-leather shoes. Now and then one could see that he wore red silk socks.

He looked out into the corridor and saw that larger groups were already going down the steps into the garden. But he sat down with his cigar and his coffee near the door of the Old German room, in which several gentlemen stood chatting together, and looked into the living-room.

Immediately to the right of the door a group sat about a small table, the centre of which was the student, who spoke with enthusiasm. He had made the assertion that more than one parallel to a straight line could be drawn through a point; Frau Hagenström, the wife of the attorney-at-law, had exclaimed: "That's impossible!" and now it was strikingly manifest that all pretended to have understood it.

But in the back of the room, on the ottoman, close to the low, red-shaded lamp, sat Gerda von Rinnlingen in conversation with young Fräulein Stephens. She sat leaning back a little on the yellow silk cushions, one foot placed over the other, and slowly smoked a cigarette, exhaling the smoke through the nose and thrusting forward her under lip. Fräulein Stephens sat upright and as though carved from wood and made her replies, smiling anxiously.

No one paid any attention to little Herr Friedemann, and no one observed that his big eyes were unremittingly directed upon Frau von Rinnlingen. He sat in a relaxed position and regarded her. There was nothing like passion in his look, and hardly any pain; something dull and dead lay in it, a heavy, powerless, and will-less surrender.

Ten minutes or so went by in this way; then Frau von Rinnlingen rose suddenly, and without looking at him, as though she had secretly observed him during

the entire time, she went up to him and remained standing before him. He stood up, lifted his eyes to her, and heard the words: "Should you care to accompany me into the garden, Herr Friedemann?"

He replied: "With pleasure, *gnädige Frau.*"

"You haven't yet seen our garden?" she asked, as they stood on the steps. "It is pretty large. I hope that there won't be too many people there yet; I should like a breath of fresh air. I got a headache during the dinner; possibly this claret was too strong for me.—Here, we must go out through this door." It was a glass door, which opened from the ante-room on a small, cool lobby; beyond a few steps led to the open air.

In the wonderful, warm, star-bright night, fragrance streamed from every flower-bed. The garden lay in full moonlight, and the guests walked up and down the white luminous gravel-paths, chatting and smoking. A group had assembled about the fountain, where the old, beloved physician amid general laughter was setting paper boats afloat.

Frau von Rinnlingen passed by with a slight inclination of her head, and pointed to the distance, where the pretty and fragrant flower-garden darkened to the denseness of a park.

"We will go down the central path," she said. Two low, broad obelisks stood at the entrance.

Behind there, at the end of the straight avenue of chestnuts, they saw the river gleaming blank and green in the moonlight. Everything about was dark and cool. Here and there a side path branched off, which no doubt also curved towards the river. For a long time no sound was heard.

"Close to the water," she said, "is a pretty place, where I have often sat. There we can chat for a mo-

ment.—Just see, now and again a star glitters through the leafage."

He did not answer, but looked at the green, shimmering surface which they were nearing. One could see the opposite bank, the park about the ramparts. As they left the avenue and stepped out on the lawn which inclined towards the river, Frau von Rinnlingen remarked: "Here is our place, a little to the right; see, it's unoccupied."

The bench on which they sat down stood close to the park, six steps to the side of the avenue. It was warmer here than between the broad trees. The crickets chirped in the grass, which close to the water passed into thin reeds. The moon-bright river reflected a mild light.

Both were silent for a while and looked at the water. Then, completely shaken, he heard the very voice he had heard a week before; this soft, deliberate, and tender tone moved him again.

"Since when have you had your affliction, Herr Friedemann?" she asked. "Were you born with it?"

He swallowed hard, for his throat was as if he were strangling. Then he replied, softly and politely: "No, *gnädige Frau,* I was dropped on the floor as a little child; it comes from that."

"And how old are you now?" she went on.

"Thirty years, *gnädige Frau.*"

"Thirty years," she repeated. "And you have not been happy, these thirty years?"

Herr Friedemann shook his head, and his lips quivered. "No," said he; "that was falsehood and imagination."

"So you believed you were happy?" she asked.

"I tried to," he said, and she replied:

"That was brave."

A minute went by. Only the crickets chirped, and behind them the trees rustled very softly.

"I understand a little about unhappiness," she then said. "Such summer nights along the water are the best thing for it."

He did not reply to this, but pointed with a feeble gesture to the other bank, which lay peacefully in the dark.

"I sat there the other day," he said.

"After you left me?" she asked.

He merely nodded.

Then suddenly he sprang up from his seat, sobbed, gave vent to a cry, a cry of complaint which at the same time had something liberating in it, and sank slowly to the ground at her feet. He had touched her hand with his, as it rested on the bench beside him, and while he held it fast, while he seized the other also, while this quite deformed little man lay twitching and quivering upon his knees before her and buried his face in her lap, he stammered in a hoarse, inhuman voice: "You know it—let me—I can't go on—my God —my God—"

She did not resist him, nor did she bend down to him. She sat fully erect, leaning a little away from him, and her small eyes, which lay so close together and in which the damp shimmer of the water seemed to mirror itself, stared fixedly straight in front of her, over his head, into the distance.

And then suddenly, with a jerk, with a short, proud, contemptuous laugh, she had torn her hands from his hot fingers, had seized his arm, thrown him sideways flat upon the ground, sprung up, and vanished in the avenue.

He lay there, his face in the grass, stunned, beside himself; and every moment a quiver went through his body. He drew himself together, made two steps, and

fell to the ground once more. He lay close to the water.

What actually went on in him during what followed now? Perhaps it was that voluptuous hate which he had felt when she humiliated him by her look, a hate which now, as he lay on the ground, after being treated by her like a dog, resolved itself into an insane fury, which called for action, even though it should be against himself—perhaps disgust at himself, which filled him with a thirst to destroy himself, to tear himself to pieces, to extinguish himself.

He pushed himself still further forward upon his stomach, lifted the upper part of his body, and let it fall into the water. He did not lift his head again; he did not once move his legs, which lay on the bank.

At the splashing of the water the crickets had for a moment grown silent. Now their chirping began again, the park rustled softly, and down through the long avenue came subdued laughter.

BARONESS BENICKI

By Heinrich Steinitzer

EVERY year in April, at the beginning of the season, the newspaper of the watering-place published a leading article on its advantages of climate and medicinal springs, ending with a list of the illustrious persons who had settled in the town as permanent residents.

As it was hardly to be expected that readers would have as much information concerning these people as the editor, each name was accompanied by a parenthesis giving the reason for their celebrity. Thus Mr. Carter Muller of Chicago was referred to as the "well-known Mæcenas. Herr von Gantenbein (of the Gan-

tenbein-Schullern-Elersbach family) and Baroness Benicki was always called the "friend of the Emperor X and of the Emperor XX."

If a stranger, on reading this, happened to be of an enquiring mind, he probably asked the waiter for a further explanation and learned that fifty years ago Baroness Benicki had been a famous beauty and also an actress and that she was now a venerable old lady. It was also true that she had been the friend of the Emperor X. Probably also of the Emperor XX. The waiter would add that she might be seen any evening—provided it were not raining—listening to the band. If the stranger followed up the matter by going to the concert pavilion, he would be shown the Baroness surrounded by a number of elderly men. She was a small white-haired old lady, whose dress was striking and colourful and who, with a total disregard of the music, would be carrying on a lively conversation with her companions.

"There she is," said the official with a certain pride, for everyone even the mayor, Dr. Pletschacher, was proud of this resident. Consequently the Baroness enjoyed official consideration, had her seat reserved at concerts and at the theatre, was invited to special entertainments while the income-tax officials accorded her the privileges enjoyed by those august circles to which her mythical friends had belonged.

The Baroness accepted these advantages as a right. She was, indeed, inclined to accept the chances and changes of life without much reflection. Her only embarrassment came from her family and this was due to the fact that the Baroness was a good-natured, somewhat heedless soul, liable at times to take on herself a little unnecessary responsibility.

She had had a daughter, the period of whose birth forbade its being in any way connected with her august

friends. In truth it must be admitted that her matrimonial lot had been fairly humble. The daughter and husband had, however, long been dead, but the former had left behind a child, a little girl, and this child the Baroness, whether she liked the duty or not, had had to bring up. Frieda disapproved of her grandmother's way of life and her somewhat easy-going views. According to her, order and stability were the foundations of happiness.. She had married a schoolmaster whose views of her sex had been derived from the Germania of Tacitus, and who had little sympathy with the Baroness' peculiarities. Since he was convinced that her death would bring him little material advantage, he spoke of her contemptuously as "that person" and compared her with Clodia, the mistress of Catullus. This amused the Baroness who in return called her grandson-in-law "the Latin evil." So far an open disagreement had been avoided, but chance fanned his smouldering enmity into flame.

As a rule the Baroness only left home to walk in the park or drive with one of her friends. One morning in June, being unable to sleep she rose at seven in order, as she expressed it, to be present "at the awakening of nature." When she stepped into the street, she found to her surprise that this awakening was pretty far advanced. Instead of going to the woods, therefore, as she had intended, she turned toward the market-place which at that hour was full of life.

It began to rain and she took shelter in a doorway. Before long she noticed that the market-women were exposed to the shower. Some, it was true, put up black or red umbrellas, but the majority drew their skirts over their heads under the impression that it was better to get damp from within outwards than the other way about. When the rain had stopped the Baroness went home, but unable to forget the women in the

market, she presently expressed an intention to provide umbrellas for them, which umbrellas should be set up in the market-place.

Rumours of her intention reached Professor Fiehsmer who swore by Hercules that he would not allow the inheritance of his children to be squandered in so foolish a way. He went at once to town, called on a lawyer and put matters in train to have the Baroness Benicki put under control on account of mental derangement, proof of which was afforded by her intention to provide umbrellas for the shelter of the market-women.

At first when she heard of this, the Baroness only laughed; but as she left all requests unanswered and ignored every legal summons, the lawsuit threatened to turn out unfavourably for her.

She had lately made the acquaintance of a Portuguese adventurer, Count Vasconcillas, who had inflamed her mind with stories of the riches he had procured for others of his friends by investing their money for them. This man persuaded her to hand over to him her capital that he might invest it abroad so that whatever the decision of the German law courts, her family would then be unable to touch it. The Baroness was delighted at the prospect of discomfiting her grandson-in-law. He might win the case but would obtain no tangible result.

"It will serve them right," she said happily. "If they had come to me, I would have given them the silly money. What does an old woman like me want with it? But to bring an action against one's grandmother is vulgar."

The Portuguese, having got possession of the Baroness' not inconsiderable capital, went abroad. For some time she heard nothing of him but at length she received a letter saying that his only hope of achieving

a fortune had been to get hold of someone else's. As he had now succeeded in doing this, she must not expect him to surrender his advantage. He admitted, though, that his conscience would have blamed him for robbing so charming a lady had she not been threatened with the same fate at the hands of the law. As a woman of taste she must be pleased that he, who understood so well the art of living, had got the money rather than her relatives who had proved themselves in every way undeserving.

The Baroness rang for her servant Globula and read her the letter.

"O Globula!" sobbed the Baroness, "tell me what I must do."

But Globula could also do nothing but weep; indeed the Baroness was the first to recover herself. She went to the telephone, rang up her friends, one after the other, and begged them to come to her at once. And they came: the retired cavalry captain Lemmenkahl and Herr von Schnabel who had been a famous rider, and Philibert, the poet of the circle, much laughed at but well liked; Visenius the scientist who could experiment with oxygen, and many other ancient but well-preserved gentlemen who had retired to this watering-place in order to die as far as possible from this new age with its lack of peace and quiet.

"Children," said the Baroness when they were all assembled. "Come with me on a difficult errand. I must do penance."

Without further explanation she went as she was, in her blue velvet dressing-gown, down the steps and out of the house, followed by her cavaliers.

The small white-haired lady in her gaudy attire caused some sensation in the street. Strangers stared in amazement, but when they saw that a policeman saluted her respectfully they considered that though

the occurrence was peculiar, its toleration by the authorities was a sufficient explanation.

Frau Professor Fiehsmer was suffering that day from migraine. She had sent her three children out with the maid in order to have some peace and was in the act of mixing herself a powder from two blue medicine bottles when the Baroness with her train entered the room.

The Baroness glanced hastily at the carpet, and choosing a shabby spot, fell on her knees. She held up her clasped hands, inclined her head to one side and said: "Forgive me, Frieda!"

The Frau Professor looked first at the kneeling old lady and then at her cavaliers standing in a semicircle about her.

When the Baroness repeated her request: "Forgive me, you must forgive me," she became alarmed.

"But Grandmama," she cried and tried to raise the old lady.

The Baroness refused: "Not until you have forgiven me in your own name and that of your children."

"But what am I to forgive?" cried her granddaughter.

The Baroness began her story: "I have thrown away your inheritance and the inheritance of your children—thrown it away, forgive me—!"

"Good gracious, then, how are you going to live?"

"I?" The Baroness stood up and looked at her cavaliers. "I have my friends!"

These words were pronounced with so much confidence that involuntarily each of the old gentlemen assumed a magnificent pose. The exception was the scientist, Visenius, who had busied himself with the bottles on the table. A sudden bubbling and hissing was heard and a foaming liquid overflowed onto the

table. Nobody took any notice but Visenius was delighted.

The Baroness surveyed her cavaliers and smiled contentedly. "I thank you," she said, "but I shall not need your assistance. I can help myself."

Bowing to her granddaughter without appearing any longer to care whether her request for forgiveness had been granted, she rustled out of the door.

Shortly after this, the chief newspaper of the watering-place gave out that it had been authorised by the Baroness Benicki to say that as she was leaving the town, an auction of various art treasures would take place at her house on a certain day. The notice was among the advertisements. In its columns, however, the paper expressed its regret at the departure of the Baroness. "Is there no way of retaining for our town," it went on, "a personality so inextricably bound up with the most brilliant epochs of our country's past? Indeed . . .?"

The cryptic conclusion was a source of pride to the editor as well as to Philibert the literary friend of the Baroness, for they had composed it.

That same afternoon the mayor, Dr. Pletschacher, called a private meeting of the Town Council. He made a speech in which he explained the circumstances of the case concluding with the suggestion that they should seize this opportunity to keep the Baroness in the town.

"She's no baroness," interrupted Körnicke, the Socialist.

Dr. Pletschacher ignored the interruption, but Körnicke was not to be silenced. "I don't care twopence for an advertisement like that," he continued. "We have our water, that's the main thing."

"Other places also have water," replied the mayor severely. "We alone have a lady such as our Baroness,

a lady who has been the friend of one, it may even be of two, emperors. It would be culpable folly to let her depart or to allow the objects which these august monarchs gave her to fall into the hands of strangers or to be sold for a mere song. Such an action might seriously damage the renown of our watering-place."

These words met with approval and with the exception of Körnicke, the Council voted unanimously that the art treasures to be put up for auction should be acquired for the historical collection of the local museum, but left, during her lifetime, in the possession of the Baroness.

"Gentlemen," said Dr. Pletschacher in conclusion, "the Baroness, as we all know, has so ideal a character, that a knowledge of our intentions might induce her to sell her treasures elsewhere. I must beg you therefore to keep our meeting a secret."

The cavaliers of the Baroness appeared at the auction in full force. They had determined to get for their old friend whatever their not very considerable means allowed, but to their astonishment, they were unable to secure the merest trifle. However high they might bid, a tall, somewhat common-looking man standing next Dr. Glubitzky, the director of the municipal museum, each time bid higher. After the auction was finished it came out that the stranger was the caretaker of the museum. This caused surprise, since no one had credited him with either money or taste.

In any case the Baroness had every reason to be satisfied with the caretaker's passion for bronzes, furniture, china and similar treasures, for the sum realised by the auction was considerable and nearly equalled the amount so ignominiously lost.

The day after the auction Dr. Pletschacher paid a visit to the Baroness. There was a subtle, scarcely per-

ceptible undertone of patronising benevolence in his greeting which the Baroness at once detected.

"I know why you have come," said she. "You want to get rid of an old woman like me. Well, I am leaving to-day."

Instantly Dr. Pletschacher's tone changed to one of respectful regard. "No, no," said he, "not so; but we have so little room in our museum, that I came in the name of the municipality to beg that the art treasures might remain with you until it is enlarged. You would render ourselves and the town a real service by granting this wish—"

The Baroness interrupted him at the point where a slight pause had been made for her answer.

"I don't care, it is true," she said, "to live among things that don't belong to me, but—" Here *she* made a pause and Dr. Pletschacher took advantage of it to pour out his gratitude and that of the municipality.

She gave him her hand and he reverently kissed the very spot which, long since, had perhaps been touched by the lips of one, it might even be of two emperors. Laying on the table a bulky envelope containing the money realised by the sale of the art treasures, he took his departure.

When the Baroness was alone she opened the envelope and laid the banknotes side by side on the table. They nearly covered it. She rang for her old and faithful servant.

"Globula," she said, "everything has turned out as I thought it would. This money belongs now to us; what do you think we should do with it?"

"Keep it," burst out Globula, then ashamed of her too hasty answer, said: "Your ladyship knows better than I what to do with it."

"Oh, Globula," said the Baroness sadly, "how can

you talk like that. We are two stupid old women who know nothing about money matters. Haven't we just shown it— In order that the same thing shall not happen again I'll give the money to Frieda—only she'll have to give me the interest."

Slowly she laid one note on the top of the other, but the last one she popped into her tiny purse and said mysteriously, "I want this for something else."

The Fiehsmer household was in low spirits when the Baroness appeared. The auction had filled the professor with gloomy forebodings lest he should have to offer a home to the old lady.

Their greeting of their grandmother was therefore not particularly warm. She, however, apparently noticed nothing. Without ado she explained the object of her visit.

"There is the money," she said and laid the fat envelope on the table. "Give me the interest on it as long as I live, it can't be long now, I am eighty-two. When I go it will be yours in any case."

The professor took the envelope, opened it and saw that it was filled with banknotes. Unable to think of anything appropriate to say, even in Latin, he murmured: "You are my wife's grandmother," but he said it with an intonation which gave the phrase significance.

The two ladies embraced each other and wept. In their tears was much that had nothing to do with the affair of the moment—sorrow at woman's fate, at getting old and giving up. They understood one another without speaking. Then the Baroness went into her granddaughter's room to powder her face, for she had another visit to pay—to the office of the morning paper.

Next day this excellent organ of public opinion contained the following announcement:

To our great satisfaction our time-honoured resident, Baroness Benicki, has now definitely decided to continue her residence in our town. As a token of her attachment to the place she has handed us a thousand marks to provide umbrella shelters for the market-women. Much as we esteem the generosity of the illustrious giver, we are of opinion that the remedying of public abuses is a matter for municipal rather than private initiative. In saying this we have no desire to find fault but . . .

The face of Dr. Pletschacher, the mayor, wore a curious expression when he read this notice. He had a hard time of it at the next meeting of the Town Council. But all the public learned was that the meeting had expressed their thanks to the Baroness. The umbrellas were ordered and ultimately cost about three times as much as the sum contributed for them by the Baroness, so that to avoid difficulties the amount was made up out of the funds set apart for the cleaning of the streets.

The market-women being accustomed to getting wet in bad weather were not greatly impressed by the umbrellas. They determined, however, to send a deputation to thank the Baroness. They hoped it might give them the opportunity to see the bed in which one, perhaps even two emperors . . . They saw it, too, through the open door of the bedroom. In the distance it looked like any other bed, but seemed a little broader.

ON A LECTURING TOUR

By Knut Hamsun

I WAS going to give a lecture on Modern Literature at Drammen, having resolved by this means to earn a sum of money that would be highly acceptable—an object, surely, to be achieved without its costing me any very great exertion. One fine day

therefore towards the end of summer I was in the train on my way to Drammen. This was in the year 1886.

I didn't know a soul in Drammen and no one knew me; nor had I advertised my lecture in the newspapers; but earlier in the summer in a moment of affluence I had had five hundred visiting cards printed and I now proposed to distribute them in hotels, restaurants, and the larger shops so that the inhabitants of the town might be made aware of the forthcoming event. The cards were, it is true, not entirely in accordance with my taste; my name was misspelt, but with a little good-will people would no doubt be able to discover that I was the person referred to. Moreover, my name was so completely unknown that a mistake was of no account one way or the other.

Whilst in the train I took stock of my financial position. This in no wise damped my spirits. I was accustomed to make my way in the face of difficulties although possessed of little or no money. Although not rich enough to live in a style worthy of my noble and æsthetic mission in this strange town, by exercising economy I should be able to manage. No extravagances! As far as food was concerned, I could slip down every evening at dusk into one of those cheap basement eating-houses, and for a hotel I would look for "Apartments for Travellers." What other expenses would there be?

I sat in the train and studied my lecture. I would speak about Alexander Kielland.

My fellow-travellers, some cheery farmers who had been in Christiania, passed round a bottle and offered me a drink but I declined with thanks. Later, as drunken and good-natured people do, they made friendly overtures to me but I would have nothing to do with them. At last they must have understood from my absorption in the notes I was making that I was

a learned man with a lot in my head, and so they left me in peace.

Upon arriving at Drammen I left the train and took my bag to a seat. I must pull myself together before going up into the town. I had brought the bag with me because I had heard it was easier to come and go in a lodging-house when one had "luggage." This poor carpet-bag had however become so worn out with age and use that it was not appropriate for a literary man on his travels, whereas the dark blue suit I had on still had a touch of respectability about it.

An hotel porter with letters on his cap offered to carry my bag but I explained that I had not yet decided on an hotel, I was to meet some editors in the town; for it was I who was to give the lecture on Literature.

Yes, but I should surely need an hotel all the same, I should have to stay somewhere. His hotel was beyond comparison the best of its kind. Electric bells, bathroom, reading-room close at hand, up this street and round to the left.

He seized the handle of my bag.

I held him back.

Was I going to carry my own luggage?

Yes, I was, for it happened that I and my bag were going the same way so I could hang it on my little finger and it would come with me.

The man looked at me and all at once realized that I was not a gentleman. He sauntered away to the train on the look-out for other travellers, but as he found none he returned and began to negotiate afresh. Finally he gave me to understand that it was really on my account he had come to the station.

Ah! That of course made a difference. The man was perhaps sent by some committee that had heard of my visit, perhaps by the Workers' Association. Un-

doubtedly intellectual life in Drammen was on a high level, there was a desire for good lectures, the town was in a state of excitement. I wasn't sure that in this respect Drammen didn't take precedence of Christiania.

"Of course you shall take my bag," I said to the man. "And by the way I suppose I can get wine at the hotel, wine with my meals?"

"Wine, sir? The best sort of wine."

"Good. You can go. I will come on later. I must first call at the newspaper offices."

The man looked as if he knew a thing or two, so I decided to consult him.

"Which of the editors would you recommend me to call on? I can't be bothered to go to all of them."

"Arentsen is the best, sir. He is a rich man. Everyone goes to him."

Arentsen was, needless to say, not to be found at the office, but I called on him in his home and told him on what mission I was engaged; it was in the service of Literature I had come to Drammen.

Well, there was not much interest in that sort of thing in this town. A Swedish student had been here the year before and lectured on Everlasting Peace; but he had lost money on it.

"I am going to speak about Literature," I said.

"Yes, I quite grasped that," replied the editor. "But I would merely warn you that you will lose on that too."

Lose on that too! Mr. Arentsen was really too amusing. Perhaps he was under the impression that I was travelling for some firm. I said curtly:

"Do you know whether the Workers' Association's large hall is free?"

"No, it is not," answered the editor. "It is let tomorrow evening. There are to be anti-spiritualist con-

juring tricks. There will also be monkeys and wild animals. The only other hall I know of is the Park Pavilion."

"Would you recommend it?"

"It is a large airy hall. Price? That I can't tell you but you will certainly get it very cheap. You must speak to the Committee."

I decided on the Park Pavilion. That was the very place. Halls belonging to Workers' Associations were often small and uncomfortable. Who were on the Committee?

Carlsen the lawyer, the furrier So-and-So, and the bookseller So-and-So.

I started off to interview Carlsen who lived in the country. I walked and walked and at last arrived at my destination. I told him what I wanted and that I wished to engage the Park Pavilion. It must be just the place for such a rare occurrence as a literary lecture.

The lawyer thought a minute but shook his head.

No? Was the hall so large? He must surely admit that it would be a pity if people were turned away through lack of room.

The lawyer explained his meaning at greater length. He could only advise me to give up the entire scheme. There was so little interest here for such things, a Swedish student had also been here on a lecturing tour. . . .

"Yes, but he lectured on Everlasting Peace," I replied, "whereas I am going to speak of Literature, belles lettres."

"Besides, you have come at an unfortunate moment," continued Mr. Carlsen. "An anti-spiritualist entertainment has just been advertised in the Workers' Association's hall, and there are to be both monkeys and wild animals."

At this I smiled and looked at the man. He seemed

to mean what he said and I gave him up as hopeless.

"How much do you want for the Park Pavilion?" I asked briefly.

"Eight shillings," he replied. "As a matter of fact the letting of the Park Pavilion has to be decided by a meeting of the Committee sitting *in pleno*. In two or three days I will let you know for certain, but I think I can already promise you the hall."

I made a lightning calculation; the two days I had to wait I reckoned would cost me three shillings, the Pavilion eight, that was eleven; the ticket-clerk one, that was twelve. An audience of twenty-four at sixpence each would thus cover the expenses; the remaining one or two hundred people who would come would therefore be profit.

I clinched the bargain. The pavilion was hired.

I found the hotel and walked in. A chambermaid asked:

"Do you want a room on the first or second floor?"

I answered quietly without ostentation:

"I want a cheap room, the cheapest you have."

The girl eyed me critically. Was I a facetious gentleman who was having a joke with her by asking for a cheap room? Wasn't it I who had made enquiries through the porter about having wine with my meals? Or was I behaving in such a modest way so as not to embarrass the hotel? She pushed open a door.

I started back.

"Yes, this is vacant," she said. "This is your room. Your luggage is already here."

There was no way out of it. I entered. It was the hotel's very best room.

"Where is the bed?"

"There it is. It's a bed-sofa. We can't very well

have a bed standing in here. But the sofa is made up into a bed at night."

The girl withdrew.

I began to feel angry. There was my wretched bag in these magnificent surroundings. And my shoes looked appalling after my long walk on country roads. As a matter of fact I swore.

At once the chambermaid poked her head round the door and asked:

"Do you want anything?"

Well really! Now I couldn't even express myself in a few words without a crowd of servants streaming into the room.

"No," I answered sharply, "I do not. That is to say bring me a couple of sandwiches."

She looked at me.

"Nothing hot?"

"No."

Then at last she understood. It must be indigestion. It was the spring and I was having my bad days.

When at last she came with the sandwiches she brought a Wine Card with her. The well-trained creature didn't leave me in peace for the rest of the evening: "Do you want your blankets warmed? The bath-room is in there, if you want . . ."

When morning came I sprang up nervously and began to dress. I was very cold; needless to say the infernal sofa had been much too short for me and I had slept badly. I rang the bell. No one came. It must be early morning, for I could hear no sound from the street and, when more composed, I realized that it was not yet quite light.

I examined the room; it was the most splendid I had ever seen. Dark suspicions assailed me and I rang the bell again. I stood there up to my ankles in the soft carpet and waited. Now I was to be fleeced of

my last few shillings, in fact possibly even they would not be enough. I began in haste to count up how much money I actually had, but hearing footsteps in the corridor I stopped.

But no one came. The footsteps were imaginary.

I began to count again. What a state of suspense to be in! Where was the chambermaid from yesterday evening with her irritating officiousness? Was the lazy creature still in bed asleep, although it was nearly daylight?

At last she came, half dressed, with a shawl wrapped round her.

"Did you ring?"

"I should like my bill," I said with as much composure as I could muster.

Bill? That wasn't such an easy matter, the manageress was still asleep, it was only three o'clock. The girl looked puzzled and stared at me. What manners to stare like that! What had it to do with her if I wished to leave an hotel at an early hour?

"I can't help that," I said. "I must have my bill now, at once."

The girl went.

This time she remained away for an eternity, and what especially increased my uneasiness was the fear that the room might possibly be charged for, according to the time it was occupied—by the hour perhaps—and that here was I lavishly squandering my money through no fault of mine—through having to wait for my bill. I had no experience of life in luxurious hotels and it now occurred to me that such a system of payment was most probable. Moreover, by the wash-stand there was a notice on the wall proclaiming that rooms which were not given up before 6 P.M. would be charged for, for the next twenty-four hours. Everything filled me with terror and confused my literary brain.

At last the chambermaid knocked at the door and came in.

Never, no, never shall I forgive Fate for playing me this trick! Three shillings, that was all! A trifle, no more than I could give the girl as a tip to buy hair-pins with! I threw some shillings on the table,—and then yet another. "Keep the change, my good girl!"

One must after all do the correct thing—to say nothing of the fact that this girl was deserving. A rare girl, a warm-hearted girl, whom Fate had thrown into this hotel at Drammen to be at the beck and call of unreasonable travellers. Women like that were no longer being born, the race had died out. What solicitude did she not show, right to the end, that is, as soon as she perceived that she had a rich man before her!

"The porter will carry your luggage."

"Not at all! Not at all!" I answered so as not to cause her any further trouble. "A little thing like this bag. And what is more, such a miserable bag. I must tell you it has accompanied me on all my literary lecturing tours; I refuse to have another, it is one of my peculiarities."

But it was of no avail to raise objections, the porter was already waiting outside. He cast a piercing look at my bag as I walked out. Ah! how such a man can look at a bag burning to lay hold of it.

"I will carry it, sir," he said.

Was I not myself in need of the money I still had left? Could I reckon on any source of income until I had given my lecture? No, I would carry the bag myself.

But the porter had it already in his hand. This extraordinarily obliging person did not seem to feel it as a burden in any way, he appeared to have no thought of any reward, he carried it simple-heartedly

and one could see that he would go to his death for the owner of such a bag.

"Stop!" I cried suddenly and stood still. "Where are you taking the bag, may I ask?"

The man smiled.

"You must settle that yourself, sir," he answered.

"There you're right," I said. "You leave this to me. It's no business of yours."

I refused to have him with me longer; we had passed an "Apartment for Travellers" in a basement, and in this basement I proposed to ask for a room. But I would not have a man from a rival hotel with me; I would slip down there by myself.

I took a sixpence from my pocket and gave it to the man.

He continued to hold his hand out.

"I carried your bag yesterday too, sir," he said.

"That's for yesterday," I replied.

"And now I am carrying it today," he continued.

The infernal scoundrel, he was robbing me.

"And this is for today," I said and threw him another sixpence. "And now perhaps you will clear off."

The porter went. But he looked back several times and kept his eye on me.

I found a seat by the side of the road and sat down. It was rather cold, but when the sun rose it became warmer. I fell asleep and must have slept for quite a while; when I awoke there were several people in the street and smoke was rising from some chimneys. I went down into the basement and came to an agreement with a woman about a room.

I was to pay sixpence a night.

When the two days of waiting were over, I set out into the country again to visit Carlsen. He repeated his advice that I should abandon the idea of giving

the lecture, but I did not allow myself to be dissuaded; I had even in the meantime spent money on an advertisement in Arentsen's paper announcing the time, place, and subject of the lecture.

As I was about to pay him for the hall, which payment would, it is true, have left me penniless, Mr. Carlsen, that remarkable man, said:

"The payment can wait until after the lecture."

I misunderstood him and felt offended.

"Perhaps you don't think that I have eight shillings?"

"Such an idea never entered my head, but to speak plainly it is by no means certain that you will have any use for the hall, and in that case, you see, you need not pay for it."

"I have already advertised the lecture," I said.

He nodded.

"Yes, I have seen it," he replied.

After a moment he asked: "Will you give it if no more than fifty people come?"

I was a little offended, but after consideration said that fifty people would certainly be a small audience but that I would give the lecture.

"But not if there are only ten?"

I laughed loudly.

"No really, you must excuse me but there is a limit to everything."

We spoke no more of this and I did not pay for the hall. We talked of literature. The lawyer no longer seemed such a hopeless person as on my first visit; he took some interest in the subject, but I felt that his opinions were of little value in comparison with mine.

When I took leave of him he wished me a full house for the lecture next evening.

I went home to my basement, filled with hope. Everything was ready for the battle. I had already

hired a man for one and sixpence to go round the town and distribute my five hundred visiting cards; the forthcoming event had become a matter of common knowledge in house and cottage.

A solemn mood came over me. The thought of the lecture now imminent made me feel ill at ease in the little basement with its shabby clientèle. People were curious as to the sort of person I was. My landlady, the woman behind the counter, explained that I was a learned man who sat and wrote and studied all day long, and insisted that I was not to be worried with questions. She was a great help to me. The men who frequented this place were hungry devils in shirt-sleeves and workmen's blouses, navvies and labourers who hurried into the basement to get a cup of hot coffee or a slice of black pudding spread with butter and whey-cheese. Sometimes they abused the landlady because the waffles were too old or the eggs too small. When they heard that I was actually to speak in the Park Pavilion they must know how much the tickets cost; some of them declared that they would like to hear me but that sixpence was too much, and began to bargain with me about the price. I determined not to let my dignity be wounded by these people; after all they were an ignorant lot.

The man in the room adjoining mine spoke a horrible mixture of Swedish and Norwegian, but my landlady referred to him as the Professor. When he strode into the bar-parlour, he aroused the greatest interest, among other reasons because he always flicked the dust off his chair with his handkerchief before sitting down. He was a man of great gentility; when he wanted bread and butter he invariably demanded "fresh bread with the best quality butter."

"Are you the lecturer?" he enquired.

"Yes, that's him," answered the landlady.

"It's a bad speculation," said the Professor, addressing me. "Why, you are not advertising. Haven't you seen how I advertise?"

I thus discovered that the gentleman was the anti-spiritualist, the man with the monkeys and the wild animals.

"I advertise with posters as large as this!" he resumed. "I stick them up on every blessed place I can get at; there are huge letters on them. Haven't you seen my letters? There are also pictures of the animals on them."

"My lecture is devoted to Literature," I objected, "that is to say to Art, to things of the mind."

"I don't give two damns for Art!" he replied, and, laughing, added: "You would do much better by joining me. I must have a man to explain about the animals, and I would rather have a stranger who is not known in the town. If I get a man who is well-known the public will shout: 'Look!! There's Petterson! What does he know about tropical animals?' "

I turned away from the man in silent contempt. I wouldn't answer such impertinence.

"Think it over!" said the Professor, "think it over. I will pay you five shillings an evening."

At this I got up and left the room. It was the only thing to do. The Professor was, of course, afraid of my competition; he feared that I should draw the whole town to hear me; he wanted to come to terms with me, to bribe me. "Never!" I said to myself, "never shall anyone induce me to desert the things of the mind! Mine is the path of the idealist!"

The fateful evening arrived. I brushed my clothes carefully, put on fresh linen, and set out for the Park Pavilion. It was seven o'clock. I had carefully studied my lecture and my head was full of the noble and beau-

tiful words I was going to use. I saw in my mind's eye an assured success; I even saw the telegraph called into use to spread the news of the battle won for Literature.

The weather was not as propitious as I should have liked, for it was raining, but a public interested in literature would surely not be kept at home by a little rain. I met people in the street, one couple after another walking under a single umbrella. Incidentally it struck me that they were not going the same way as I—to the Park Pavilion. Where could they be going? Alas! It was probably the common herd on their way to the Workers' Association and the monkeys.

The ticket-clerk stood at his post.

"Has anyone come?" I asked.

"Not yet," he replied, "but there is still another half-hour."

I entered the hall, the immense hall where my footsteps echoed like horses' hoofs. Ah! if only there had been a full house—ladies and gentlemen, shoulder to shoulder, only waiting for the lecturer! But not a soul was to be seen!

I waited that long half-hour; no one came. I went out to the clerk and asked his opinion. It was guarded, but comforting. In his opinion people stayed at home when it rained so heavily, but my audience might be expected to arrive in the last few minutes.

We waited.

At last came a man, dripping with rain and in haste; he bought his sixpenny ticket and went in.

"They are beginning to come," said the clerk and nodded, "that's the usual damn silly habit people have of turning up in crowds at the last minute."

We waited. No more came. At last the one member of my audience came out of the hall, saying:

"What appalling weather!"

It was the lawyer Carlsen.

"I am afraid nobody will be coming this evening," he said. "It is raining cats and dogs!" He noticed my downcast look and added: "No, I could tell from the barometer that this was going to happen. It was sinking too rapidly. That was why I tried to dissuade you from giving your lecture."

The ticket-clerk still looked on the bright side.

"We had better wait another half-hour," he said, "it would be a damn funny thing if twenty or thirty didn't turn up in the end after all."

"I doubt it very much," said the lawyer, buttoning up his mackintosh. "While I remember it," he said turning to me, "there will of course be nothing to pay for the hall."

He raised his hat, nodded, and departed.

The ticket-clerk and I waited another half hour and discussed the matter at great length with each other. It was a bad business and I felt extremely humiliated. The lawyer had gone off without the sixpence which should have been returned to him. I would have run after him with it but the ticket-clerk stopped me.

"It's all right," he said, "I'll keep it. Then you only owe me another sixpence."

But I gave him a whole shilling. He had been faithful to me in the work with which I had entrusted him and I wanted to show my appreciation. He thanked me heartily and shook hands with me as we parted.

I made my way home, a beaten man. The disappointment, the disgrace almost paralysed me; I wandered listlessly through the streets not noticing where I was. The crowning disaster was that I no longer had the means to pay my ticket back to Christiania.

It continued to rain.

I had arrived in front of a large building; I saw from the street an illuminated ticket-window in the entrance hall. It was the house belonging to the Work-

ers' Association. Every now and then a belated arrival would hurry in, buy his ticket, and disappear through the big doors into the hall. I asked the ticket-clerk how many there were, and he told me that the hall was now nearly full.

That wretched Professor had succeeded where I had failed. Succeeded brilliantly.

I crept home to my basement. I ate nothing, I drank nothing, but went quietly to bed.

Late at night I heard a knock on my door. A man entered with a candle in his hand. It was the Professor.

"How did you get on with your lecture?" he asked.

In other circumstances I would have thrown the man out of the door; I was however too humbled for such spirited behaviour, so answered that I had cancelled it.

He smiled.

"Not the sort of weather for a lecture on Literature," I explained.

He continued to smile.

"If you knew how terribly the barometer has fallen," I said.

"I had my hall packed to overflowing," he replied. He had stopped smiling, and even asked me to excuse him for disturbing me. The reason was that he had come on business.

This business was of an extremely curious nature: he had come to offer once again to engage me as a lecturer at his entertainments.

I was wounded to the quick and ordered him peremptorily to leave the room and not deprive me of my night's rest.

Instead of going he seated himself on my bed, the candlestick still in his hand.

"We can at least discuss the matter," he said and proceeded to tell me that the native of Drammen whom

he had engaged to "explain the animals" had been recognised by everyone. He himself—the Professor—with his anti-spiritualist conjuring tricks had been an enormous success, but the native of Drammen had spoilt the show. "Look, there's Bjorn Pedersen," the audience had shouted, "where did you get that badger from?" But Bjorn Pedersen had explained according to the program that it was not a badger at all, but a hyena from the Bushmen's country which had already devoured three missionaries. Thereupon the audience had howled with fury at his trying to make fools of them. "I can't understand it," said the Professor, "I had blacked his face thoroughly and put a great wig on his head; and yet he was recognised."

All this did not concern me in the least and I turned my face to the wall.

"Think it over," said the Professor before taking his departure. "I might even go so far as to pay six shillings an evening, that is, if you did your work well."

Never, I resolved, would I demean myself to such an extent as to accept this vulgar job! One was after all a gentleman!

The next day the Professor came to me and asked me to look at the lecture which had been written about the animals. Would I correct it here and there and improve the style? He would pay me for it. I should have two shillings.

In spite of everything I undertook this work. I should be doing the man a favour, and for all practical purposes it was work in the service of Literature. Besides I needed the two shillings. But I enjoined him most strictly to keep my collaboration a secret.

I worked all day, revised the lecture from beginning to end, put feeling and wit into the descriptions, and

became more and more engrossed in my work. It was a *tour de force* to make so much out of a few poor animals. When in the evening I read it aloud to the Professor, he declared he had never heard anything equal to this lecture in his life. In acknowledgement of this he gave me three shillings.

This moved and encouraged me. I began once more to cherish hopes of my literary mission in life.

"If I only had a capable man to recite this speech!" lamented the Professor. "But such a man is not to be found in this town."

I began to turn the matter over in my mind. It would be annoying if some Bjorn Pedersen or other should get hold of such a choice speech and ruin it by reading it badly. I couldn't bear to think of it.

"I could perhaps give the lecture on certain conditions," I said.

The Professor moved his chair nearer.

"What conditions? I'll give you seven shillings," he said.

"Very well, I will agree to that. But the chief thing is that only you and I must know who your lecturer really is."

"I promise you that."

"Yes, because you can surely understand," I said, "that a man of my profession cannot very well be seen making a speech about animals."

Yes, he understood that.

"And if the speech had not been my work from beginning to end, I would never have consented."

He understood that also.

"In that case I will do it for you as a favour," I said.

The Professor thanked me.

At seven o'clock we went together to the Workers'

Association. I was to have a look at the animals and get some idea of how to handle them.

They turned out to be two monkeys, a turtle, a bear, two wolf cubs, and a badger.

My "explanation" contained not a word about the wolves or the badger, but was concentrated on a certain hyena from the Bushmen's country, a sable and a marten "as mentioned in the Bible," as well as an enormous American gray bear. As regards the turtle, I had invented the witticism that it was a fine lady who lived on nothing but genuine mock-turtle soup.

"Where are the sable and the marten?" I asked.

"Here," replied the Professor, pointing to the wolf cubs.

"And where is the hyena?' '

He pointed without hesitation to the badger, and answered:

"Here is the hyena."

I grew hot with indignation, and said:

"I won't have anything to do with that sort of thing, it's a swindle. I must believe in what I am saying; it must be my deepest conviction."

"Don't let us quarrel over such a trifle," said the Professor. He produced a brandy bottle from a corner and offered me a drink.

To show that I had no feeling against him personally but only against his discreditable methods, I took the glass and drained it. After that he took a drink himself.

"Don't ruin me!" he said. "The speech is so magnificent now, and the animals are not at all bad, really they are not; look what a splendid great bear this is! If you make the speech, everything will be all right."

The first spectators were now beginning to take their seats in the hall, and the Professor became more and more uneasy. I held his fate in my hand; but

upon consideration I came to see the conclusion that I ought to use my power with moderation. Moreover, I saw the impossibility of making the many necessary corrections in my speech during the few minutes that remained to me; besides, it would be almost beyond the power of anyone, whoever he was, to put the same feeling into the description of a badger as into the portrayal of the life of a terrible hyena. I could not therefore take the responsibility of making corrections whereby my literary work would lose so much in value. I pointed this out to the Professor.

He grasped my meaning in a flash. He poured out another glass and I drank.

The performance commenced before a full house. The anti-spiritualist did conjuring tricks that no one on earth could fathom; he drew handkerchiefs out of his nose, found the Knave of Clubs in the pocket of an old woman at the back of the hall, and made a table cross the floor without touching it; finally the Professor became a ghost and sank into the ground through a trap-door. The spectators were wild with enthusiasm and stamped on the floor as if mad. Now it was the animals' turn. The Professor brought them in himself one by one, and it was left to me to speak about them.

It was clear to me from the beginning that I could not hope to rival the Professor's success, but I hoped at least that those among my audience who really had some power of discrimination would be interested in my contribution. Nor was I disappointed in this.

When the turtle had been displayed, I had only to concern myself with land animals, and so I took as the starting point of my lecture the story of Noah, who took with him into the Ark two of all the animals which could not live in water. But the presentation of the animals went off rather flatly; the audience had

lost its high spirits. The sable and the marten were not appreciated as they deserved, although I even related how many valuable furs from these animals the Queen of Sheba wore when visiting Solomon. Then however I began to feel that things began to go better; as I became warmed up by this Biblical subject and by the two drinks I had had, my lecture gained in colour and beauty. I laid my notes aside and extemporized, and when I came to an end several voices down on the hall shouted "Bravo!" and the whole house applauded.

"There's a drink waiting for you behind the curtain!" whispered the Professor to me.

I withdrew and found the drink. The bottle stood beside it. I sat down for a moment on a chair.

In the meantime the Professor introduced a fresh animal and stood there waiting for me. I poured myself out another glass and sat down again. The Professor apparently felt that the interval of waiting was becoming too long; he began himself to give a description of the animal in his appalling mixture of Swedish and Norwegian, and I noticed to my horror that it was the hyena he was exhibiting; in his agitation he even lost his head and called it a badger. I was filled with indignation and striding on to the stage I waved the Professor aside with a sweep of my arm and took up the discourse myself. The hyena was the trump card in the exhibition; I had to speak as never before in order to rescue it, and already from the moment of my reappearance when I waved the Professor aside with my arm I had the audience on my side. I disavowed the Professor, said he had never seen a hyena in his life, and began to picture the shocking life led by such a ferocious animal. The drinks had had their effect; my enthusiasm rose to a dizzy height and I perceived myself that my words became more vehement and fiery, whilst the hyena stood at the Professor's

feet, blinking patiently with its tiny eyes. "Keep tight hold of him," I shrieked to the Professor. "He's getting ready to spring, he'll have my guts out! Keep your pistol ready in case he tears himself away!"

The Professor must have been nervous himself; he tugged the hyena towards him—the cord snapped, and the animal slipped between his legs. Shrieks from women and children arose from the hall and half the spectators stood up. At this moment the excitement reached its climax. Then the hyena tripped away from us across the stage and back to its little cage. The Professor slammed the door after it, and bolted it.

We all took a deep breath, and I concluded my speech with a few words. "This time luck has been with us," I said, "but this very evening we will see that the brute is secured with a heavy iron chain." I bowed and retired.

Then the applause broke loose; it became absolutely deafening, and everyone was shouting for the lecturer. I went back and bowed again; there was not the slightest doubt that I was a tremendous success. The last people who left the hall were clapping as they went out. But there were also some who were laughing.

The Professor was satisfied; he thanked me sincerely for my assistance. He felt sure he would get a full house many more times.

As I was about to go home I found a man waiting for me outside the door. It was the ticket-clerk from the Park Pavilion. He had been present at the performance and was delighted. He praised my eloquence in loud tones; I must on no account give up my lecture at the Park Pavilion; this was the time to announce it, now that people had seen what I could do. For instance a repetition of my lecture on the hyena, especially if I had the animal itself with me.

But the Professor, lacking as he did all sense of shame, refused to pay me my money on the following day. Unless I undertook in writing to appear the next evening also, he would take it to court, he said. The swindler, the scoundrel! We came however to an amicable agreement; he consented to pay me five shillings. With the three he had already given me this was eight, and I now had money enough for a ticket back to Christiania. But he was to keep the written lecture. We haggled for a long time over this point as I was unwilling to hand it over for pure profanation. On the other hand it was indisputably his property and he had paid for it. So at last I gave in. Well—he valued my work very highly.

"I have never heard such a speech in all my life," he said, "I shall always remember yesterday evening, it moved me more than any sermon has ever done."

"Yes, you can see!" I replied. "That is the power of Literature over the mind!"

These were my last words to him. At midday I took the train back to Christiania.

THE MAGIC RING

By Marcu Beza

EVERYONE knew Tina Sidu, slim and small, in a black gown, on her head a kerchief of the same colour, from beneath which hung two curls as signs of mourning, curls which quivered in lines of shadow on the tearworn face. She often took the same road and the women whispered:

"Tina Sidu. . . . ."

"Poor Tina! No news to this day!"

Thoughtfully their gaze followed her as she made her way toward the outskirts of the village. Above the

Dry Valley lay a house which was unlike other houses. With unplastered walls, bare rafters, eaves falling over under the weight of the tiles, the house stood silent during the day among patches of nettles and poisonous weeds. When night fell, tumult arose—a whirlwind of sound, a noise of whistling and the ringing of bells. When the disturbance was at its height a figure would cross the threshold and riding upon a distaff rush toward the valley. After cock-crow, the house relapsed once more into the silence of ruin.

"You have come?" said a voice as Tina Sidu approached, a voice which during the day showed itself in the form of an old woman of the name of Boja. "Ah yes, my daughter, I shall help you to see—"

For a time Boja silently arranged the cards. At last, without looking at Tina Sidu she began:

"It is the same as before . . . ah, may he be punished, but there he is! By his side is a woman, it can be no other than she, your child. See, the cards fall together. To the woman comes a longing, a turning toward you—a longing full of tears, my daughter; she cries, how she cries! And here—a road which runs toward the sunset. She has passed along it once and turned back . . . There is a journey—I foretell a journey—later on—not tomorrow nor the day after, but later. . . ." Laying the cards aside she raised her hard, worn face, in which the eyes flickered rapidly like fireflies, and added softly: "The cards speak, my daughter, but they do not tell much. Come again at night. Come when the waters are sleeping. Only then shall we be able to find out where she dwells. . . ."

With eyes downcast and full of tears, Tina Sidu left the witch. Her lips moved and she murmured, "Ica, my Ica!"

For nearly six months, in torturing uncertainty, she had sought the smallest clue as to her daughter's

whereabouts. "Where is she? Will she come back to me?" Her mind ran continually upon Ica and, amid the mist of incomprehensible things, old memories began to stir. Scenes long past brought a glow of remembered happiness which, however, only increased her sense of loss. She could not help dwelling on them, however.

It was Easter Sunday in the afternoon. From the foot of the wood rose strains of music, far-off and faint. Tina, waiting for her daughter, had lost patience. She went restlessly from door to window and back. She called to Ica.

"Come, dear one, it is late and nearly everyone has gone, nearly everyone."

Ica was lingering before the glass. When at last she appeared and Tina beheld her in her blue satin gown, she exclaimed with delight.

"You are as beautiful as a sunbeam!" And, flying to the window, she picked from the flower-pot a red peony. Fastening it in the girl's hair she took the dear face between her hands and kissed it, crying, "May the evil eye not harm you, my dove."

They started, but every few steps Tina must turn to glance at her daughter as though she could eat her up with love.

Beyond the village, from the grassy clearing above which the forest stretched away indefinitely with its fresh springs, its tender grass and mosses, came the sound of lutes, clarionets and drums. The dance had begun, the young men on one side, the girls on the other. Dressed in festal clothes, with the sun sparkling on necklace, silks and curls, the dance might have been likened to the movement of flowers woven into a garland. Now they mingled, now they drew apart. In their hands were flowers of every colour. The on-

lookers, standing in the sloping meadow as on terraces, followed them with their gaze.

"Look at Oana's Sirma, like a may-blossom."

"And Zitza Dedu, how she has changed. . . ."

"The girls grow up, that is certain. We shall soon be thinking of weddings."

"Look quickly—who is this?"

All turned as Ica approached. From what fairy palace was she come?

Her face was white, of a vivid whiteness, like velvet, but when she was dancing, when she stepped forward at the head of the line, she glowed like the peony in her hair. Swinging in graceful rhythm, she hardly knew whether she trod the ground. Her lips were parted, her teeth shining and little curls were lifted from her forehead by the breeze. A murmur ran round: "Tina's Ica, long life to her, long life to her!" Mothers would have been willing to accept her as a daughter-in-law and even when the dance was at an end, the talk was still of her, for in the eyes of the young men she lingered like the new moon. They were enthralled by her warm beauty, they adored her in their thoughts. Whispers grew rhythmically, word linked itself to word and next day a song was being sung. It rose unexpectedly from the road below the houses and Tina heard it.

One evening she could not refrain from crying out: "Ica, my dear one, come. Come, here."

From over the hills floated a song—some drover doubtless, so transitory was the sound, moving away with his caravan. On the calm night breeze, drifting across the open spaces, it sounded so clearly that the softest inflexions could be heard. The final words, faint, fraught with charm, died on the distance.

"The jewel of our world
Is Ica—lovely Ica."

"Do you hear, dear one?"

The girl's eyes filled with pleasure and her bosom heaved. Yet a few seconds later, as she passed through the room, she pretended to disbelieve.

"That is like you, mother! Am I the only Ica? It is a common name and there are many besides me. . . ."

Coming close to Tina, she added bashfully, "Am I lovely, mother?"

"Are you not, Treasure? Is anyone more beautiful?"

"Why do you say so, mother? I am not plump and rosy like Sirma."

"Ah, but the expression of your mouth, your eyes. . . ."

"Come, mother, Zitza has eyes like mine."

"Zita may have those eyes, but yours are like almonds. They are so soft, so soft that your mother never tires of kissing them."

The happiness of mother and daughter was increased by the return of Tina's husband. Four years previously Sidu had gone on business to Stamboul. After this long absence he reached home safe and well. Tina laughed and cried, not knowing in which way to show her joy. How much there was to ask, how much to tell. They spoke of the living and the dead, of engagements and weddings. The wife began to speak of the dance at the edge of the forest, of her daughter's success and Ica threw her arms round her father's neck, whispering in a half-song:

"The jewel of our world
Is Ica, lovely Ica."

How was it that on these happy lives fell change, a change for the worse? Winter came, a winter with snow so heavy that the posts marking the road on the

top of the hill were buried. One evening, out of the white distance, a stranger came to the village, a traveller. Where could he find hospitality? Nowhere more fitly than at Sidu's house. As the traveller entered Tina saw at a glance that he must be the son of a Pasha. Underneath his black pelisse trimmed with sable, he wore a gold-embroidered jacket and trousers. What else then could he be? He was a handsome man, tall and bronzed, with flashing eyes and at the corners of his mouth, beneath his black moustache was an expression, shadowy but attractive.

Had he heard of Ica? Perhaps, for speaking to Sidu he asked: "How many children have you?"

"Only the one daughter."

Tina, to whom Sidu translated the words, raised a finger, adding in her native speech which it appeared that the stranger did not understand: "So many has God given us."

It fell to the daughter of the house to serve the stranger. When she appeared in the doorway with the tray he uttered a quickly stifled cry, and stared, his black eyes flashing. The girl blushed, then turned ashy white, trembling till the tray nearly slipped from her hands. The mother, looking on, thought she was shy of this stranger upon whom it was her duty to wait.

During the meal the stranger appeared to be lost in thought, but from time to time the blood flooded his face. Tina, watching him, said to her husband:

"Ask his name and whence he comes, for we should know."

"I have asked. He is Ruhi Bey from Saraghiol."

The traveller hearing Sidu utter his name looked up with a smile and nod. He left on the following day—as a bird which comes from the unknown and returns to it.

How could Tina have guessed what was to follow?

She stood at the window by Ica's side, following him with her gaze as his figure dwindled till hidden by the snow. Only when she turned back into the room did she hear Ica say: "Mother—look, mother!"

By the cup out of which the stranger had drunk, lay a ring.

"He has dropped it, he has forgotten it," said Sidu uneasily, but Ica was pleased with it. She put it on, begging her mother to note how fine was its workmanship. It was of gold and set with a dark stone that flashed as had the stranger's eyes.

At the end of the winter Sidu had again to leave home on business. The parting was troubled by forebodings. Ica clasped her father in her arms, hugged him again and again. Disquieted he turned to Tina.

"Take good care of the child," said he.

From that time Ica was changed.

One night Tina was roused by an unusual sound. She lay wondering what could have caused it, but presently fell asleep again. Once more the disturbing sound and a voice as the voice of the Blessed Virgin from the icon, whispered: "Get up, Tina. All is not well," but again she slept.

When toward morning she finally awoke, Ica was not there.

The next day and the third and the fourth passed. Ica had gone from her, gone without a word of explanation or farewell.

At first Tina felt sure the child would return. She said to herself, "Come now, why distress myself, I shall see her soon. If I go out I shall find her here when I return. . . ."

During the first days of Ica's absence, Tina did not think of it as due to the stranger. In time, however, trifling recollections took on importance, became suspicious.

Who was the man? And that ring—had he not left it on purpose? How curiously the stone in the gold setting had shone. How changeable it had been, turning in the light from deep blue to sapphire, and from sapphire to a paler blue. When Ica gazed into its depths what had she seen?

Tina remembered a day when the child, dreaming, had whispered, "What eyes he had."

"Who, dear one?"

"The traveller, mother. And how handsome he was."

"Handsome, yes—but a Turk, my love, a Turk!"

"What if he were a Turk? Are not Turks the same as ourselves, mother?"

"As ourselves? Yes, but you see, dear one—that is to say, they are of course the same but Turks, Turks."

During those first days of uncertainty, some shepherds brought the news that, from the Muric slopes, toward daybreak of the day on which Ica had disappeared, a troop of horsemen had been seen. Their leader appeared to be holding a woman in his arms and all had galloped along the road toward Seraghiol.

This agreed with Boja's card-throwing—"Toward the sunset—your daughter. . . ."

Tina had gone again to consult her.

The sorceress had lighted a fire on the hearth and upon the flames, muttering an inaudible incantation, she threw dried herbs. The flames quivered, crackling bright and high. At the same moment a sudden storm rose from the Dry Valley, a storm which increased and beat against the house. Boja sat unmoved, staring at the tongues of flame. After a time she said:

"The ring, my daughter . . . that which others have bound I cannot unloose."

The words were almost lost in a confusion of sounds.

Phantoms beat against the walls, their sinister cries sounding above that of the wind. A gust blew down the chimney, beating on the fire and filling the room with the smell of the burnt herbs, filling it also with a suffocating smoke. Boja was scarcely visible, she appeared to have receded into a suddenly appearing distance, when fragments only of her speech reached the listener.

"Now I see them . . . there is a seraglio . . . pass through the door . . . what a door, my daughter! From room to room. They keep her imprisoned in seven rooms with seven keys."

Involuntarily Tina murmured: "Seven rooms with seven keys," and she must have repeated these words in the presence of others for by the following day they were in everybody's mouth.

"Seven rooms with seven keys."

But where the seraglio might be remained an insoluble mystery.

Caravans coming from a distance passed between the houses. The sound of their bells drew the people to their doors and the strangers halted, willing to talk, to tell of places far away. The caravans moved on but left behind suspicions and suppositions. Rumours arose. Imagination was at work, building that seraglio, giving it a place on earth.

"Somewhere in Saraghiol, with high turreted walls . . . a marble staircase . . . Ica descends it. . . . She sits by the fountain in the garden. . . . The water leaps and falls and twists itself into strings of pearls. . . . Ica cries and cries. . . . To drive away her longing a slave comes out and plays the castanets. . . . Still she cries . . ."

Fresh rumours rose. Unexpected, mysterious, like flakes of snow they came. The position of the seraglio was given with certainty. Peter Shodi, a well-known

drover, described it to the unhappy mother. "It is above Cailar, beyond the impenetrable Buiuc-Orman, as you come from the plain."

When, however, search was made, it proved fruitless. The seraglio was not there. The villagers were beside themselves with astonishment. They met together, uneasy, frightened, thrilled with the fear of something hidden and sinister.

"Is it possible? The man swore on his oath!"

"He said he saw it with his eyes."

"Perhaps wicked spirits did it. They are able to build palaces out of nothing. They can cast spells on us to make us see what is not there."

"How did Shodi know it was the seraglio?"

"He did not know. The man lifted his eyes and suddenly a woman appeared. 'Whose is this palace?'

" 'The palace? Ruhi Bey's.'

"Ruhi Bey's—who knows? The woodman may have been he himself. There he is a woodman, here the son of a Pasha, perhaps elsewhere he is something different again. . . . That Ruhi Bey is a great magician."

What was Tina to believe? What was she to say? From her husband she received letters asking after Ica and when he knew the truth, letters full of bitterness. Boja when consulted repeated the phrase: "There is a journey—I foretell a journey—"

On one occasion she added: "When the leaves have grown she will come."

But the leaves burgeoned and faded, the vines yielded their fruit and the grapes were gathered, the white snow fell and the snow melted, the leaves grew again and the hot weather came.

During those days Tina would stand at the window without moving for hours together. The mountains in the west grew blue. Out of their mysterious world

white clouds arose like birds. Tina would have liked to ask them: "Tell me—where is she now? What is she doing? Does she long for home?" The clouds dissolved, bringing her crowding thoughts a sense of finality, a suffering lacking tears—a suffering with which nothing could be compared. The sharp sound of the fretting wood-fretter could be heard; below lay the deserted garden, from among the fading trees, from among the rank-smelling weeds about which spiders threw their glittering threads, small winged creatures floated in the intense heat. They fluttered into the room emphasizing the silence by their continuous murmur, till Tina's sight grew dim and outlines grew misty. After a while she would lose her sense of reality, and whisper to herself:

"Ica, my treasure, you have not left me . . . you are here, my soul. . . . Ah, I knew you had not gone. . . ."

Years after, at twilight on a spring day, the sound of trotting horses was heard upon the road. A number of riders drew up at Sidu's house and, dismounting one after the other, they knocked on the door. Three, four, many times they knocked. . . .

An old man lying in a neighbouring house spoke to them. "Whom do you seek?"

"Is not Tina here?" asked the voice of a woman. The old man started in surprise, holding his breath. The woman was a stranger, wearing a Turkish mantle, yet she spoke in the language of the village, and her face, dimly seen through the dusk of evening—like a shadow from the past—seemed to him familiar.

"Which Tina?" he asked. "Ica's mother? But—Ica's mother died of grief."

The woman, after a pause, overcome, hardly re-

straining her tears, asked: "And Sidu? Is not this the house of Sidu?"

"Sidu went from us to live among strangers. He has not been seen again; but I have been told that God has taken Sidu, also, to Himself."

Passing through Niveasta in Macedonia with the caravans I have seen the ruined walls that were once the home of Ica.

ON A RAFT

By Maxim Gorki

I

HEAVY clouds drift slowly across the sleepy river, and hang every moment lower and thicker. In the distance their ragged grey edges seem almost to touch the surface of the rapid and muddy waters, swollen by the floods of spring, and there, where they touch, an impenetrable wall rises to the skies, barring the flow of the river and the passage of the raft.

The stream, swirling against this wall—washing vainly against it with a wistful wailing swish—seems to be thrown back on itself, and then to hasten away on either side, where lies the moist fog of a dark spring night.

The raft floats onward and the distance opens out before it into heavy cloud—massed space. The banks of the rivers are invisible; darkness covers them, and the lapping waves of a spring flood seem to have washed them into space.

The river below has spread into a sea; whilst the heavens above, swathed in cloud masses, hang heavy, humid, and leaden.*

* The river is the Volga, and the passage of strings of rafts

There is no atmosphere, no colour in this grey blurred picture.

The raft glides down swiftly and noiselessly, whilst out of the darkness appears, suddenly bearing down on it, a steamer, pouring from its funnels a merry crowd of sparks, and churning up the water with the paddles of its great revolving wheels.

The two red forward lights gleam every moment larger and brighter, and the mast-head lantern sways slowly from side to side, as if winking mysteriously at the night. The distance is filled with the noise of the troubled water, and the heavy thud-thud of the engines.

"Look ahead!" is heard from the raft. The voice is that of a deep-chested man.

Two men are standing aft, grasping each a long pole, which propel the raft and act as rudders: Mitia, the son of the owner, a fair, weak, melancholy-looking lad of twenty-two and Sergei, a peasant, hired to help in the work on board the raft, a bluff, healthy, red-bearded fellow, whose upper lip, raised with a mocking sneer, discloses a mouth filled with large, strong teeth.

"Starboard!" A second cry vibrates through the darkness ahead of the rafts.

"What are you shouting for; we know our business!" Sergei growls raspingly; pressing his expanded chest against the pole. "Ouch! Pull harder, Mitia!"

down its stream in early spring is being described by the author. The allusion later on to the Brotherhood living in the Caucasus, refers to the persecuted Doukhobori, who have since been driven from their homes by the Russian authorities and have taken refuge in Canada.

In order to enter into the sociology of this story of Gorky's it must be explained that amongst ancient Russian folk-customs, as the young peasants were married at a very early age, the father of the bridegroom considered he had rights over his daughter-in-law. In later times, this custom, although occasionally continued, was held in disrepute amongst the peasantry; but that it has not entirely died out is proved by the little drama sketched in by the hand of a genius in "On a Raft."

Mitia pushes with his feet against the damp planks that form the raft, and with his thin hands draws towards him the heavy steering pole, coughing hoarsely the while.

"Harder, to starboard! You cursed loafers!" The master cries again, anger and anxiety in his voice.

"Shout away!" mutters Sergei. "Here's your miserable devil of a son, who couldn't break a straw across his knee, and you put him to steer a raft; and then you yell so that all the river hears you. You were mean enough not to take a second steersman; so now you may tear your throat to pieces shouting!"

These last words were growled out loud enough to be heard forward, and as if Sergei wished they should be heard.

The steamer passed rapidly alongside the raft sweeping the frothing water from under her paddle wheels. The planks tossed up and down in the wash, and the osier branches fastening them together, groaned and scraped with a moist, plaintive sound.

The lit-up portholes of the steamer seem for a moment to rake the raft and the river with fiery eyes, reflected in the seething water, like luminous trembling spots. Then all disappears.

The wash of the steamer sweeps backwards and forwards, over the raft; the planks dance up and down. Mitia, swaying with the movements of the water, clutches convulsively the steering pole to save himself from falling.

"Well, well," says Sergei laughing. "So you're beginning to dance! Your father will start yelling again. Or he'll perhaps come and give you one or two in the ribs; then you'll dance to another tune! Port side now! Ouch!"

And, with his muscles strung like steel springs, Sergei gives a powerful push to his pole, forcing it deep

down into the water. Energetic, tall, mocking and rather malicious, he stands barefooted, rigid, as if a part of the planks; looking straight ahead, ready at any moment to change the direction of the raft.

"Just look there at your father kissing Marka! Aren't they a pair of devils? No shame, and no conscience. Why don't you get away from them, Mitia; away from these Pagan pigs? Why? Do you hear?"

"I hear," answered Mitia in a stifled voice, without looking towards the spot which Sergei pointed to through the darkness, where the form of Mitia's father could be seen.

"I hear," mocked Sergei, laughing ironically.

"You poor half-baked creature! A pleasant state of things indeed!" he continued, encouraged by the apathy of Mitia. "And what a devil that old man is! He finds a wife for his son; he takes the son's wife away from him; and all's well! The old brute!"

Mitia is silent, and looks astern up the river, where another wall of mist is formed. Now the clouds close in all round, and the raft hardly appears to move, but to be standing still in the thick dark water, crushed down by the heavy grey-black vaporous masses which drift across the heavens, and bar the way.

The whole river seems like a fathomless, hidden whirlpool, surrounded by immense mountains, rising towards heaven, and capped with shrouding mists.

The stillness suffocates, and the water seems spell-bound, with expectation, as it beats softly against the raft. A great sadness, and a timid questioning is heard in that faint sound;—the only voice of the night,—accentuating still more the silence. "We want a little wind now," says Sergei. "No, it's not exactly wind we want—that would bring rain," he replies to himself, as he begins to fill his pipe. A match strikes, and the bubbling sound of a pipe being lighted is heard. A red

gleam appears, throwing a glow over the big face of Sergei; and then, as the light dies down he is lost in the darkness.

"Mitia!" he cries. His voice is now less brutal and more mocking.

"What is it?" replies Mitia, without moving his gaze from the distance, where he seems with his big sad eyes to be searching for something.

"How did it happen, mate?—How did it happen?"

"What?" answers Mitia, displeased.

"How did you come to marry? What a queer set out! How was it? You brought your wife home!—and then? Ha! ha! ha!"

"What are you cackling about? Look out there!" came threateningly across the river.

"Damned beast!" ejaculates with delight Sergei; and returns to the theme that interests him. "Come, Mitia; tell me; tell me at once—why not?"

"Leave me alone, Sergei," Mitia murmurs entreatingly; "I told you once."

But knowing by experience that Sergei will not leave him in peace, he begins hurriedly: "Well, I brought her home—and I told her: 'I can't be your husband, Marka; you are a strong girl, and I am a feeble, sick man. I didn't wish at all to marry you, but my father would force me to marry. He was always saying to me, "Get married! get married!" I don't like women, I said: and you especially, you are too bold. Yes—and I can't have anything to do—with it. Do you understand? For me, it disgusts me, and it is a sin. And children—one is answerable to God for one's children.' "

"Disgusts," yells Sergei, and laughs. "Well! and what did Marka reply? What?"

"She said, 'What shall I do now?' and then she began to cry. 'What have you got against me? Am

I so dreadfully ugly?' She is shameless, Sergei, and wicked! 'With all this health and strength of mine, must I go to my father-in-law?' And I answered: 'If you like—go where you wish, but I can't act against my soul. If I had love for you, well and good; but being as it is, how is it possible? Father Ivan says it's the deadliest sin. We are not beasts, are we?' She went on crying: 'You have ruined my chances in life!' And I pitied her very much. 'It's nothing,' I said; 'things will come all right. Or,' I continued, 'you can go into a convent.' And she began to insult me. 'You are a stupid fool, Mitia!—a coward!' "

"Well, I'm blest!" exclaims Sergei, in a delighted whisper. "So you told her straight to go into a convent?"

"Yes, I told her to go," answers Mitia, simply.

"And she told you you were a fool?" queried Sergei, raising his voice.

"Yes, she insulted me."

"And she was right, my friend; yes, indeed, she was right! You deserve a proper hammering." And Sergei, changing suddenly his tone, continued with severity and authority: "Have you any right to go against the law? But you *did* go against it! Things are arranged in a certain way, and it's no use going against them! You mustn't even discuss them. But what did you do? You got some maggot into your head. A convent, indeed! Silly fool! What did the girl want? Did she want your convent? What a set of muddle-headed fools there seems to be now! Just think what's happened! *You,* you're neither fish nor fowl, nor good red-herring! And the girl's done for! She's living with an old man! And you drove the old man into sin! How many laws have *you* broken? You clever head!"

"Law, Sergei, is in the soul. There is one law for

everyone. Don't do things that are against your soul, and you will do no evil on the earth," answered Mitia, in a slow, conciliatory tone, and nodding his head.

"But you did do evil," answered Sergei, energetically. "In the soul! A fine idea! There are many things in the soul. Certain things *must* be forbidden. The soul, the soul! You must first understand it, my friend, and then—"

"No, it's not so, Sergei," replied Mitia with warmth, and he seemed to be inspired. "The soul, my friend, is always as clear as dew. It's true, its voice lies deep down within us, and is difficult to hear; but if we listen, we can never be mistaken. If we act according to what is in our soul, we shall always act according to the will of God. God is in the soul, and, therefore, the law must be in it. The soul was created by God, and breathed by God into man. We have only to learn to look into it—and we must look into it without sparing our own feelings."

"You sleepy devils! look ahead there!" The voice thundered from the forward part of the raft, and swept back down the river. In the strength of the sound one could recognise that the owner of the voice was healthy, energetic, and pleased with himself. A man with large and conscious vitality. He shouted, not because he had to give a necessary order to the steersmen, but because his soul was full of life and strength, and this life and strength wanted to find free expression, so it rushed forth in that thunderous and forceful sound.

"Listen to the old blackguard shouting," continued Sergei with delight, looking ahead with a piercing glance, and smiling. "Look at them billing and cooing like a pair of doves! Don't you ever envy them, Mitia?"

Mitia watched with indifference the working of the

two forward oars, held by two figures who moved backwards and forwards, forming sometimes as they touched each other one compact and dark mass.

"So you say you don't envy them?" repeated Sergei.

"What is it to me? It's their sin, and they must answer for it," replied Mitia, quietly.

"Hm!" ironically interjected Sergei, whilst he filled his pipe.

Once more the small red patch of light glowed in the darkness; and the night grew thicker, and the grey clouds sank lower towards the swollen river.

"Where did you get hold of all that fine stuff, or does it come to you naturally? But you don't take after your father, my lad! Your father's a fine old chap. Look at him! he's fifty-two now, and see what a strapping wench he's carrying on with! She's as fine a woman as ever wore shoe-leather. And she loves him; it's no use denying it! She loves him, my lad! One can't help admiring him, he's such a trump, your father—he's the king of trumps! When he's at work, it's worth while watching him. And then, he's rich! And then, look how he's respected! And his head's screwed on the right way. Yes. And you? You're not a bit like either your father or your mother. What would your father have done, Mitia, do you think, if old Anfesa had lived? That would have been a good joke. I should have liked to have seen how she'd have settled him! She was the right sort of woman, your mother! a real plucky one, she was! They were well matched!"

Mitia remained silent, leaning on the pole, and staring at the water.

Sergei ceased talking. Forward on the raft was heard a woman's shrill laugh, followed by the deeper laugh of a man. Their figures, blurred by the mist, were nearly invisible to Sergei, who, however, watched

them curiously. The man appeared as a tall figure, standing with legs wide apart, holding a pole, and half turned towards a shorter woman's figure, leaning on another pole, and standing a few paces away. She shook her forefinger at the man, and giggled provokingly.

Sergei turned away his head with a sigh, and after a few moments' silence began to speak again.

"Confound it all, but how jolly they seem together; it's good to see! Why can't I have something like that? I, a waif and a stray! I'd never leave such a woman! I'd always have my arms round her, and there'd be no mistake about *my* loving the little devil! I've never had any luck with women! They don't like gingerhair—women don't. No. She's a woman with fancies, she is! She's a sly little devil! She wants to see life! Are you asleep, Mitia?"

"No," answered Mitia, quietly.

"Well, how are you going to live? To tell the truth, you're as solitary as a post! That seems pretty hard! Where can you go? You can't earn your living among strangers. You're too absurd! What's the use of a man who can't stand up for himself? A man's got to have teeth and claws in this world! They'll all have a go at you. Can you stick up for yourself? How would you set about it? Damn it all; where the devil *could* you go?"

"I," said Mitia, suddenly arousing himself; "I shall go away. I shall go in the autumn to the Caucasian Mountains, and that will be the end of it all. My God! If only I could get away from you all! Soulless, godless men! To get away from you, that's my only hope! What do you live for? Where is your God? He's nothing but a name! Do you live in Christ? You are wolves; that's what you are! But over there live other men, whose souls live in Christ. Their

hearts contain love, and are athirst for the salvation of the world. But you—you are beasts, spewing out filth. But other men there are; I have seen them; they called me, and I must go to them. They gave me the book of Holy Writ, and they said: 'Read, man of God, our beloved brother, read the word of truth!' And I read, and my soul was renewed by the word of God. I shall go away. I shall leave all you ravening wolves. You are rending each other's flesh! Accursed be ye!"

Mitia spoke in a passionate whisper, as if overpowered by the intensity of his contemplative rapture, his anger with the ravening wolves, and his desire to be with those other men, whose souls aspired towards the salvation of the world. Sergei was taken aback. He remained quiet for some time, open-mouthed, holding his pipe in his hand. After a few moments' thought he glanced round, and said in a deep, rough voice: "Damn it all! Why, you're turned a bad 'un all at once! Why did you read that book? It was very likely an evil one. Well, be off, be off! If not, there'll be an end of you! Be off with you before you become a regular beast yourself! And who are these fellows in the Caucasus? Monks? Or what?"

But the fire of Mitia's spirit died down as quickly as it had been kindled to a flame; he gasped with the exertion as he worked the pole, and muttered to himself below his breath.

Sergei waited some time for the answer which did not come. His simple hardy nature was quelled by the grim and death-like stillness of the night. He wanted to recall the fullness of life, to wake the solitude with sound, to disturb and trouble the hidden meditative silence of the leaden mass of water, flowing slowly to the sea; and of the dull threatening clouds hanging

motionless in the air. At the other end of the raft there was life, and it called on him to live.

Forward, he could hear every now and then bursts of contented laughter, exclamations, sounds that seemed to stand out against the silence of this night, laden with the breath of spring, and provoking such passionate life desires.

"Hold hard, Mitia! you'll catch it again from the old man! Look out there!" said Sergei, who could not stand the silence any longer; and watching Mitia, who aimlessly moved his pole backwards and forwards in the water.

Mitia, wiping his moist brow, stood quietly leaning with his breast against the pole, and panting.

"There are few steamers to-night;" continued Sergei. "We've only passed one these many hours." Seeing that Mitia had no intention of answering, Sergei replied quietly to himself: "It's because it's too early in the season. It's only just beginning. We shall soon be at Kazan. The Volga pulls hard. She has a mighty strong back, that can carry all. Why are you standing still like that? Are you angry? Hi, there, Mitia!"

"What's the matter?" Mitia cried in a vexed tone.

"Nothing, you strange fellow; but why can't you talk? You are always thinking. Leave it alone! Thinking is bad for a man. A wise sort of fellow you are! You think and think, and all the time you can't understand that you're a fool at bottom. Ha! Ha!" And Sergei, satisfied with his superiority, cleared his throat, remained quiet for a moment, whistled a note, and then continued to develop his theme.

"Thinking? Is that an occupation for a working man? Look at your father; he doesn't think much; he lives. He loves your wife, and they laugh at you together; you wise fool! That's about it! Just listen

to them! Blast them! I believe Marka's already with child. Never fear, the child won't feature you. He'll be a fine, lusty lad, like Silan himself! But he'll be *your* child! Ha! Ha! Ha! He'll call *you* father! And you won't be his father, but his brother; and his real father will be his grandfather! That's a nice state of things! What a filthy family! But they're a strapping pair! Isn't that true, Mitia?"

"Sergei!" In a passionate, sobbing whisper. "In the name of Christ I entreat you don't tear my soul to pieces, don't brand me with fire. Leave me alone. Do be quiet! In the name of God and of Christ, I beg you not to speak to me! Don't disturb me! Don't drain my heart's blood! I'll throw myself in the river, and yours will be the sin, and a great sin it will be! I should lose my soul; don't force me to it! For God's sake, I entreat you!"

The silence of the night was troubled with shrill, unnatural sobbing; and Mitia fell on the deck of the raft, as if a blast from the overhanging clouds had struck him down.

"Come, come!" growled Sergei, anxiously watching his mate writhing on the deck, as if scorched with fire. "What a strange man! He ought to have told me if it was not—if it was not quite——"

"You've been torturing me all the way. Why? Am I your enemy?" Mitia sobbed again.

"You're a strange lad! a rum 'un!" murmured Sergei, confused and offended. "How could *I* know? I couldn't tell you'd take on like that!"

"Understand, then, that I want to forget! To forget for ever! My shame, my terrible torture. You're a cruel lot! I shall go away, and stay away for ever! I can't stand it any more!"

"Yes, be off with you!" cried Sergei across the raft, accentuating his exclamation with a loud and cynical

curse. Then he seemed to shrink together, as if himself afraid of the terrible drama which was unfolding itself before him; drama, which he was now compelled to understand. . . .

"Hullo! there! I'm calling you! are you deaf!" sounded up the river the voice of Silan. "What are you about there? What are you bawling about? Ahoy! Ahoy!"

It seemed as if Silan enjoyed shouting, and breaking the heavy silence of the river with his deep voice, full of strength and health. The cries succeeded each other, thrilling the warm, moist air, and seeming to crush down on Mitia's feeble form. He rose, and once more pressed his body against the steering pole. Sergei shouted in reply to the master with all his strength, and cursed him at the same time under his breath.

The two voices broke through and filled the silence of the night. Then they seemed to meet in one deep note like the sound of a great horn. Once more rising to shrillness, they floated in the air, gradually sank away—and were lost.

Silence reigned once more.

Through the cleft clouds, on the dark water the yellow splashes of moonlight fell, and after glittering a moment disappeared, swept away in the moist gloom.

The raft continued on its way down stream amidst silence and darkness.

II

Near one of the forward poles stood Silan Petroff in a red shirt, open at the neck, showing his powerful throat and hairy chest, hard as an anvil. A thatch of grey hair fell over his forehead, under which laughed great black warm eyes. His sleeves, turned up to the elbow, showed the veins standing out on his arms as they held the pole. Silan was leaning slightly forward,

and looking watchfully ahead. Marka stood a few paces from him, glancing with a satisfied smile at the strong form of her lover. They were both silent and busy with their several thoughts. He was peering into the distance, and she followed the movements of his virile, bearded face.

"That must be a fisherman's fire," said he, turning towards her.

"It's all right; we're keeping on our course. Ouch!" And he puffed out a full, hot breath, and gave a powerful shove with his pole.

"Don't tire yourself, Mashourka," he continued, watching her, as with her pole she made a skilful movement.

She was round and plump, with black bright eyes and ruddy cheeks; barefooted, dressed only in a damp petticoat, which clung to her body, and showed the outline of her figure. She turned her face to Silan and, smiling pleasantly, said: "You take too much care of me; I'm all right!"

"I kiss you, but I don't take care of you," answered Silan, moving his shoulders.

"That's not good enough!" she replied, provokingly; and they both were silent, looking at each other with desiring eyes.

Under the rafts, the water gurgled musically. On the right bank, very far off, a cock crew. Swaying lightly under their feet, the raft floated on towards a point where the darkness dissolved into lighter tones, and the clouds took on themselves clearer shapes and less sombre hues.

"Silan Pertovitch, do you know what they were shouting about there? I know. I bet you I know. It was Mitia who was complaining about us to Sergei; and it was he who cried out with trouble, and Sergei was cursing us!"

Marka questioned anxiously Silan's face, which, after her words, became grim and coldly stubborn.

"Well!" shortly.

"Well, that's all!"

"If that's all, there was nothing to say."

"Don't get angry."

"Angry with you? I should like to be angry with you, but I can't."

"You love Marsha?" she whispered, coaxingly leaning towards him.

"You bet!" answered Silan, with emphasis, stretching out towards her his powerful arms. "Come now, don't tease me!"

She twisted her body with the movements of a cat, and once more leaned towards him.

"We shall upset the steering again," whispered he, kissing her face which burnt under his lips.

"Shut up now! They can see us at the other end"; and motioning aft with her head, she struggled to free herself, but he held her more tightly still with one arm, and managed the pole with the other hand.

"They can see us? let them see us. I spit on them all! I'm sinning, that's true; I know it; and shall have to answer for it to God; but still you never were his wife; you were free; you belonged to yourself. He's suffering, I know. And what about me? Is my position a pleasant one? It is true that you were not his wife; but all the same, with my position, how must I feel now? Is it not a dreadful sin before God? It is a sin! I know it all, and I've gone through everything! Because it's a thing worth doing! We love only once, and we may die any day. Oh! Marka! If I'd only waited a month before marrying you to Mitia, nothing of this would have happened. Directly after the death of Anfesa I would have sent my friends to propose for you, and all would have been right! Right before the

law; without sin, without shame. That was my mistake, and this mistake will take away from me five or ten years of my life. Such a mistake as that makes an old man of one before one's time."

Silan Petroff spoke with decision, but quietly, whilst an expression of inflexible determination flashed from his face, giving him the look of a man who was ready then and there to fight and struggle for the right to love.

"Well, it's all right now; don't trouble yourself any more. We have talked about it more than once already," whispered Marka, freeing herself gently from his arms, and returning to her oar.

He began working his pole backwards and forwards rapidly and energetically, as if he wished to get rid of the load that weighed on his breast, and cast a shadow over his fine face.

Day broke gradually.

The clouds, losing their density, crept slowly away on every side, as if reluctantly giving place to the sunlight. The surface of the river grew lighter, and took on it the cold gleam of polished steel.

"Not long ago he talked with me about it. 'Father,' he said, 'is it not a deadly shame for you, and for me? Give her up!' He meant *you,*" explained Silan, and smiled. 'Give her up,' he said; 'return to the right path!' 'My dear son,' I said, 'go away if you want to save your skin! I shall tear you to pieces like a rotten rag! There will be nothing left of your great virtue! It's a sorrow to me to think that I'm your father! You puny wretch!' He trembled. 'Father,' he said, 'am I in the wrong?' 'You are,' I said, 'you whining cur! because you are in my way! You are,' I said, 'because you can't stand up for yourself! You lifeless, rotten carrion! If only,' I said, 'you were strong, one could kill you; but even that isn't possible! One pities you, poor, wretched creature!' He only

wept. Oh, Marka! This sort of thing makes one good for nothing. Any one else would—would get their heads out of this noose as soon as possible, but we are in it, and we shall perhaps tighten it round each other's necks!"

"What do you mean?" said Marka, looking at him fearfully, as he stood there grim, strong and cold.

"Nothing! If he were to die! That's all. If he were to die—what a good thing it would be! Everything would be straight then! I would give all my land to your family, to make them shut their mouths; and we two might go to Siberia, or somewhere far away. They would ask, 'Who is she?' 'My wife! Do you understand?' We could get some sort of paper or document. We could open a shop somewhere in a village, and live. And we could expiate our sin before God. We could help people to live, and they would help us to appease our consciences. Isn't that so, Marsha?"

"Yes," said she, with a deep sigh, closing her eyes as if in thought.

They remained silent for a while; the water murmured.

"He is sickly. He will, perhaps, die soon," said Silan after a time.

"Please God it may be soon!" said Marka, as if in prayer, and making the sign of the cross.

The rays of the spring sun broke through the clouds, and touched the water with rainbow and golden tints. At the breath of the wind all nature thrilled, quickened, and smiled. The blue sky between the clouds smiled back at the sun-warmed waters. The raft, moving on, left the clouds astern.

Gathering in a thick and heavy mass, they hung motionless, and dreaming over the bright river, as if seeking a way to escape from the ardent spring sun, which,

rich in colour and in joy, seemed the enemy of these symbols of winter tempests.

Ahead, the sky grew clearer and brighter, and the morning sun, powerless to warm, but dazzling bright as it glitters in early spring, rose stately and beautiful from the purple-gold waves of the river, and mounted higher and ever higher into the blue limpid sky. On the right showed the brown, high banks of the river, surmounted by green woods; on the left emerald green fields glittered with dew diamonds. In the air, floated the smell of the earth, of fresh springing grass, blended with the aromatic scent of a fir wood.

Sergei and Mitia stood as if rooted to their oars, but the expression on their faces could not be distinguished by those on the forward part of the raft.

Silan glanced at Marka.

She was cold. She leant forward on her pole in a doubled-up attitude. She was looking ahead with dreaming eyes; and a mysterious, charming smile played on her lips—such a smile as makes even an ugly woman charming and desirable.

"Look ahead, lads! Ahoy! Ahoy!" hailed Silan, with all the force of his lungs, feeling a powerful pulse of energy and strength in his strong breast.

And all around seemed to tremble with his cry. The echo resounded long from the high banks on either side.

SALT

By Isaac Babel

DEAR COMRADE EDITOR:*—I want to write to you about the unconscientiousness of women, who are doing us no good. I hope when you went round the frontiers that you took note

* The letter-writer is an ignorant man, hence the mistakes.

of the ancient station of Fastov which is far away from everywhere in some district or other. I do not know how many miles away. I was there, of course, and drank home-brewed beer, which is not half bad. There is a lot that might be said about the above-mentioned station, but as we say in our humble way—"one can't go dragging round the Lord's rubbish." That is why I am only going to describe to you what I saw with my own eyes.

Well, it was a nice quiet little night,* a week ago, when the cavalry train stopped there, all loaded with men. We were all of us burning to serve the common cause, and were bound for Berditchev. Only we notice our train won't get a move on anyhow. Jehu doesn't start the engine and the men began to wonder what we had gone and stopped for. Right enough the stop turned out to be of darned big importance for the common cause, because the bagmen,† our worsest enemies, among which there is also a countless force of the feminine sex, had the face to use the railways. They boldly got hold of the hand-rails, those worsest enemies did, and rushed onto the iron roofs, and crowded and swarmed about, and the familiar salt was present in everyone's hands, up to five poods in a bag. But the bagmen's victory did not last long.

The initiative of the men what went and got out of the carriages, gave the railway authorities a chance to breathe. Only the feminine sex remained round about with their sacks. Out of pity for them the men settled

* The vagueness of this passage is due to its being a reproduction of the beginning of Russian fairy tales.

† Bagmen means the traders who brought supplies of food in bags from the country to the towns. The trading was prohibited, for not only did it help to depreciate the rouble, send up the price of food and interfere with the State's organization of transport, but the traders speculated in necessities. Nothing availed, however, to check these smuggling activities until the NEP (new economic policy) came into force.

some of the women in the trucks, but some of them they did not. In our compartment also, were two girls, and as soon as the first bell had rung, up comes a matronly woman with a baby and says:

"Let me come in, Cossackies. What with these stations, I've had to put up with a lot, all through the war, with my little baby in my arms. And now I want to see my husband, but it's impossible to travel because the railway trains are full of soldiers. Now I have deserved better, haven't I, Cossackies?"

"My good woman," I says to her, "what the platoon decides about it, will be the way your fate will turn out." And, turning to the platoon, I shows them that the matronly woman asks to go to her husband, and that the infant is really with her, "and what will be your decision, to let her in or no?"

"Let her in," shouts the lads, "she won't want her husband—not after us!"

"No," I says to the lads, quite politely, "with all my respects, platoon, but I am surprised to hear such beastliness from you. Remember your own lives, platoon, and how you, yourselves were babies along of your own mothers, and then you will see it doesn't do to talk like that."

And the Cossacks talked between themselves as how Balmashev had gone and growed persuasive-like, and they began to let the woman into the compartment; and she got in thankfully, and every one of them sort of boiling over with the truth of what I had said, settled her down, one outdoing the other:

"Sit down in the corner, my good woman, and cuddle your baby as mothers do, nobody will touch you in your corner and you will get to your husband safe and sound as you want to; and we are reckoning on your conscience to bring up others to take our place, because the old are getting old, and there's not many

young ones about. We have had bad times, my good woman, on ordinary days and on emergency days too; and been choked with hunger and blistered with cold. But you sit down here, my good woman, and don't you worry."

And when the third bell had gone and rung, the train got a move on. And the nice little night pitched its tent. And in that tent were stars like illumination lamps, and the men remembered the nights in Kuban and the green Kuban star. And a sort of dream thought flew past like a bird. And the wheels went rumpty-tum, rumpty-tum. . . .

When the night-time was up, and its guard had changed, and little red drummers beat in the dawn on their little red drums, the Cossacks came up to me, seeing as I was sitting without sleeping and was just about as fed up as I could be.

"Balmashev," the Cossacks say to me, "why do you look so down in the mouth, sitting like that without a wink of sleep?"

"My respects, men—one little request; let me have two words with that citizen there."

And shaking all over, I get up from my resting-place that sleep had fled like a wolf from a pack of savage hounds, and go up to her and tear off the swaddling clothes and rags and see a good pood of salt under all those swaddling clothes.

"That's a funny kid, comrades, one that doesn't ask for the breast or wet the skirts or disturb people when they are sleeping!"

"Excuse me, kind Cossackies," the woman interrupted as cool as a cucumber, "it wasn't me as deceived you, it's the trouble I am in as did it."

"Balmashev will forgive your trouble all right," I answers the woman. "It didn't cost Balmashev nothing much. What Balmashev has paid for a thing,

he sells it at that same price. . . . But you look at the Cossacks, my good woman, the chaps as put you on a pedestal for being a mother as worked for the republic. Look at them two girls as are crying at present on account of what they went through from us this night. Look at our wives in the wheat plains of the Kuban, what are spending their women's strength without husbands, and the husbands not less lonely, and only through dire necessity violating the girls that come into their lives. And nobody touches you, you wicked woman, though that's what would have gone and served you right. Look at Russia crushed with misery—"

And she answers me back:

"I've gone and lost my salt so I'm not afraid of saying the truth. You don't bother your heads about Russia, you just go about saving the dirty Jews, Lenin and Trotsky."

"We aren't talking about the Jews now, you harmful citizen. The Jews haven't got nothing to do with this. By the way, I won't say nothing about Lenin, but Trotsky was the desperate son of the governor of Tambov * and went over to the working classes though he himself belonged to another class. They work like niggers, Lenin and Trotsky do, to pull us on to the free road of life, and you, abominable woman, you're more counter-revolutionary than the White General as goes about on a horse that's cost thousands and threatens us with the sharp point of his sabre. He can be seen from everywhere, that general can, and the workers are only dreaming and planning to get at him and do him in; but you just a plain citizen, with your comic kids that don't ask to be fed and don't run out in the wind—you can't be seen no more than a flea can and you go biting away for all you're worth."

* The speaker was misinformed. Neither was Lenin a Jew.

And I don't mind telling you straight that I threw that citizen from the moving train down the railway embankment. But she, being big and broad, only sat for a moment, then flapping her skirts about her went on her vile way. And seeing that woman going along like that, and Russia round her like I don't know what; and the peasants' fields without an ear of corn; and the outraged girls and the comrades, lots of which go to the front but few return, I had a mind to jump out of the carriage and put an end to my life or else put an end to her. But the Cossacks took pity on me and said:

"Give her one from your rifle."

So I took my faithful rifle off the wall and washed away that stain from the face of the workers' land and the republic.

And we, the men of the second platoon, swear to you, dear Comrade Editor, and to your dear comrades in the editor's office, that we will deal without mercy with all the traitors as are dragging us to the dogs and want to turn everything upside down and cover Russia with nothing but corpses and dead grass.

In the name of all the men of the second platoon.

NIKITA BALMASHEV,
Soldier of the Revolution.

CONALL CRA BHUIDHE

CONALL CRA BHUIDHE was a sturdy tenant in Eirinn: he had four sons. At that time a different king reigned over every fifth of Eirinn, and it fell out for the children of the king that was near Conall, that they and the children of Conall

From *Tales of the Western Highlands,* orally collected by J. F. Campbell.

came to blows. The children of Conall got the upper hand and they killed the king's big son.

The king sent a message to Conall, saying—"Oh, Conall! What made thy sons go to spring on my sons till my big son was killed by thy children? Yet I see that though I follow thee revengefully I shall not be the better for it; therefore I will set a thing before thee, and if thou wilt do it I will not follow thee with revenge. If thou and thy sons will get for me the brown horse of the king of Lochlann, thou shalt get the souls of thy sons."

"Why," quoth Conall, "should I not do the pleasure of the king, though there should be no souls of my sons in dread at all? Hard is the matter required of me, but I will lose my life and the life of my sons, or else I will do the pleasure of the king."

After these words Conall left the king and went home in much trouble and perplexity. When he went to lie down he told his wife the thing the king had set him to do. His wife took much sorrow that he was obliged to part from herself, for she knew not if she should see him more.

"Oh, Conall," said she, "why didst thou not let the king do his own pleasure to thy sons, rather than be going now, while I know not if ever I shall see thee more?"

When he rose on the morrow, he and his four sons took their journey toward Lochlann, and they made no stop till they reached it. When they reached Lochlann the old man said to his sons—"Stop ye, and we will seek out the house of the king's miller."

When they went into the house of the king's miller, the man asked them to stop there for the night. Conall told the miller that his children had killed the king's son, and there was nothing that would please the king

but that he should get the brown horse of the king of Lochlann.

"If thou wilt put me in the way to get him, for certain I will pay thee for it."

"The thing is silly that thou art come to seek," said the miller; "for the king has laid his mind on the horse so greatly that thou wilt not get him in any way unless thou steal him; but if thou thyself canst make out a way, I will hide thy secret."

"This, I am thinking," said Conall. "Since thou art working every day for the king, thou and thy gillies should put me and my sons into five sacks of bran."

"The plan that came into thy head is not bad," said the miller and he spoke to his gillies, and he said to them to do this, and they put them in five sacks. The king's gillies came to seek the bran, and they took the five sacks with them and emptied them before the horses. The servants then locked the door and went away.

When the sons rose to lay hand on the brown horse Conall said, "You shall not do that. It is hard to get out of this place. Let us make ourselves five hiding holes, so that if they perceive us we may go into hiding."

They made the holes and then laid hands on the horse. The horse was pretty well unbroken and he made a terrible noise through the stable.

The king heard the noise. "It must be that that was my brown horse," said he to the gillies; "try what is wrong with him."

The servants went out and when Conall and his sons perceived them coming, they went into the hiding holes. The servants looked among the horses and they did not find anything wrong; and they returned and told this to the king, and the king said that if nothing was wrong they should go to their places of rest.

When the gillies had time to be gone, Conall and his sons laid the next hand on the horse. If the noise was great that he made before the noise he made now was seven times greater. The king sent a message for his gillies again, and said for certain that there was something troubling the brown horse.

"Go and look well about him."

The servants went out and Conall and his sons went to their hiding holes. The servants rummaged well and did not find a thing. They returned and they told this.

"That is marvellous to me," said the king; "go you to lie down again, and if I perceive any further noise I will go out myself."

When Conall and his sons perceived that the gillies were gone, they laid hands again on the horse, and one of them caught him, and if the noise that the horse made on the two former times was great, he made more this time.

"I believe," said the king, "that someone is troubling my brown horse." He sounded the bell hastily, and when his waiting man came to him, he told him to rouse the stable gillies as something was certainly wrong with the horse. When the gillies came the king went with them.

When Conall and his sons perceived all those that were coming, they went to the hiding holes; but the king was a wary man and he saw in what part of the stable the horses were disturbed.

"Be clever," said the king, "there are men within the stable. Look well and we shall find them."

The king followed the tracks of the men and he found the hiding holes. Every man was acquainted with Conall, for he was a tenant valued by the king of Eirinn. When the king had had them brought up out of the holes, he said, "Oh, Conall, art thou here?"

"I am, O king, without question, and necessity made me come. I am under thy pardon, and under thine honour, and under thy grace." He then told what had happened to him and that, if he could not get the brown horse for the king of Eirinn, his sons would be put to death. "I knew that I should not get him by asking, and I was going to steal him."

"Yes, Conall, that's well enough," said the king, "but come in." He then desired his look-out men to set a watch on the sons of Conall, but to give them their meat. And a double watch was set on them that night. "Now, O Conall," said the king, "wert thou ever in a harder place than to see thy lot of sons hanged to-morrow? But thou didst set it to my goodness and my grace and that it was necessity brought it on thee and I must not hang thee. Tell me any occasion on which thou wert as hard put to it as this, and if thou canst, thou shalt save the soul of thy youngest son."

"I will tell thee a case as hard in which I was," said Conall.

"When I was a young lad, my father had much land and he had parks of year-old cows, and one of them had just calved, and my father told me to bring her home. I took with me a laddie, and we found the cow and took her with us. A shower of snow fell. We went into a herd's bothy and we took the cow and calf in with us and waited for the shower to pass.

"What came in then but a cat followed by ten others, and one great one-eyed fox-coloured cat who was head bard over them all. In very deed I had no liking for their company. 'Strike up with you,' said the head cat, 'and sing a cronan to Conall Cra-Bhui.'

"I was amazed that my name was known to the cats.

"When they had sung the cronan, said the head bard, 'Now, O Conall, pay the reward of the cronan that the cats have sung to you.'

" 'Well, then,' said I, 'I have no reward whatsoever for you, unless you should go down and take that calf.'

"No sooner said I the word than the two cats and ten went down to attack the calf, and, in very deed, he did not last them long.

" 'Play up with you, why should you be silent,' said the head bard. 'Make a cronan to Conall Cra-Bhui.'

"Certainly I had no liking at all for the cronan, but up came the one cat and ten, and sang me a cronan then and there!

" 'Pay them now their reward,' said the great fox-coloured cat.

" 'I am tired of yourselves and your rewards,' said I. 'I have no reward for you unless you take that cow down there.' They betook themselves to the cow and indeed she did not stand them out for long.

" 'Why will you be silent? Go up and sing a cronan to Conall Cra-Bhui,' said the head bard, and surely, oh, king, I had no care for them or for their cronan, for I began to see that they were not good comrades. When they had sung me the cronan they betook themselves down to where the head bard was. 'Pay now their reward,' said he; and for sure, oh, king, I had no reward for them; and I said, 'I have no reward for you, unless you will take that laddie with you and make use of him.'

"When the boy heard this he took himself out and the cats after him. And surely, oh, king, there was caterwauling between them. When they took themselves out, I got out at a turf window that was at the back of the house and ran as hard as I could into the wood. I was swift enough and strong at that time; and when I heard the rustling toirm of the cats after me I climbed into the highest tree in the place, one that was leafy at the top, and I hid myself as well as I might.

"The cats began to search for me through the wood but they were not finding me; and, when they were tired, one said to the other that they would turn back.

" 'You saw him not with your two eyes,' said the one-eyed, fox-coloured cat that was commander-in-chief over them, 'and though I have but one eye, there's the rescal in the top of that tree.'

"When he said that, one of them climbed the tree, but as he was coming where I was, I drew a weapon that I had and killed him.

" 'Take this from me,' said the one-eyed cat, 'I will not be losing my company thus. Gather round the root of the tree and dig, and let down that extortioner to earth.'

"On this they dug about the root, and the first root that they cut, the tree gave a shiver to fall and I myself a shout, and it was not to be wondered at.

"In the neighbourhood of the wood was a priest who had ten men with him delving, and he said, 'That is a shout of extremity and I must reply to it.'

"Said the wisest of the men, 'Let it alone till we hear it again.'

"The cats dug wildly and they broke the next root, and I gave another shout, which in very deed was not weak.

" 'Certainly,' said the priest, 'it is a man in extremity —let us move.' And the men set themselves in order for moving.

"The cats rose on the tree and broke the third root and the tree fell on her elbow. I gave a third shout and the stalwart men hasted. When they saw how the cats served the tree, they began at them with the spades; and they and the cats began at each other, till they were killed altogether, the men and the cats. And surely, oh, king, I did not move till I saw the last of them falling.

"I came home—and there's for thee the hardest case in which I ever was. It seems to me that tearing by the cats were harder than hanging tomorrow by the king of Lochlann."

"Oh, Conall!" said the king, "thou art full of words. Thou hast freed the soul of thy son with thy words, and if thou tellest me a harder case than having thy three sons hanged tomorrow, thou wilt save thy second youngest son, and then thou wilt have two sons."

"Well, then," said Conall, "on that condition I'll tell thee of what was harder than being in thy power and thy prison tonight."

"Let's hear," said the king.

"It was where I was as a young lad," said Conall. "I went out hunting and my father's land was beside the sea and it was rough with rocks, caves and chasms. As I went along the shore I saw smoke coming up between two rocks and I went to see the reason why the smoke should be coming up there. While I was looking, what should I do, but fall down. The place was so full of manure that neither bone nor skin was broken, only I could not see how to get out. I looked up the way I had come—and the day will never dawn that I could climb up there. I believed I should be there till I died and it was terrible. Then I heard a clattering and saw a giant with a dozen of goats that had a buck at their head. When the giant had tied the goats he came up and said to me—

" 'Hao O! Conall, it's long since my knife is rusting in my pouch waiting for thy tender flesh.'

" 'Och!' said I, 'it's not much thou wilt be bettered by me, though thou should'st tear me asunder; for I would make but one meal for thee. But I see that thou art one-eyed. I am a good leech and I will give thee the sight of the other eye.'

"The giant drew the great chaldron on the site of the

fire, with me telling him how he should heat the water so that I could give its sight to the other eye. I got heather and made a scraper of it and I set the giant upright in the chaldron. I began at the eye that was well, pretending to him that I could give its sight to the other eye, but I left the well as bad as the other—for surely it was easier to spoil the one that was well than to give sight to the other.

"When he perceived that he could not get a glimpse out of either eye, and when I myself said to him that I would get out of the place in spite of him, he gave a spring and was out of the water. Standing in the mouth of the cave he said he would have revenge for the loss of his eye.

"I had to stay crouched the length of the night, holding my breath in such a way that he would not know where I was.

"When he heard the birds calling in the morning and knew it was day, he said, 'Art thou sleeping? Awake and let out my goats.'

"I killed the buck and he cried, 'I will not believe that thou art not killing my buck.'

" 'I am not,' said I, 'but the ropes are so tight that I take long to loose them.'

"I let out one of the goats and as he caressed her he said, 'There thou art, thou shaggy, hairy white goat, and thou seest me, but I see thee not.'

"I was letting them out, one and one, as I flayed the buck, and before the last was out I had him flayed bagwise. Then I put my legs in place of his legs, and my hands in place of his forelegs and my head in place of his head with the horns on top of my head, so that the giant might think it was the buck. I went out. As I was passing the giant laid his hand on me and said, 'There thou art, thou pretty buck; thou seest me but I see thee not.'

"When I got out and saw the world about me, surely, oh, king! joy was on me.

" 'I am out now in spite of thee,' I said to the brute.

" 'Aha!' said he. 'Hast thou done this to me? Since thou wert so stalwart that thou hast got out, I will give thee a ring that I have here. Keep the ring and it will do thee good.'

" 'I will not take the ring from thee,' said I, 'but throw it and I will take it with me.'

"He threw the ring on the flat ground and I went, lifted the ring and put it on my finger. He said to me then, 'Is the ring fitting thy finger?'

"I said to him, 'It is.'

"He said, 'Where art thou, ring?'

"And the ring said, 'I am here.'

"The brute betook himself toward where the ring was speaking, and now I saw that I was in a harder case than ever I was.

"I drew a dirk. I cut the finger off from me and threw it as far as I could out in the loch, and there was a great depth in the place.

"He shouted, 'Where art thou, ring?'

"The ring said, 'I am here,' though it was on the ground of ocean.

"He gave a spring after the ring and out he went in the sea. I was as pleased when I saw him drown as though thou wouldst give me my own life and the life of my two sons, and not lay any more trouble on me.

"When the giant was drowned I went in and took all he had of gold and silver, and I went home, and surely great joy was on my people when I arrived. As a sign for thee, look thou, the finger is off me."

"Yes, indeed, Conall, thou art wordy and wise," said the king. "I see thy finger is off. Thou hast freed thy two sons, but tell me a case in which thou wert that

is harder than looking on thy two sons being hanged tomorrow and thou wilt get the soul of thy second eldest son."

"Then went my father," said Conall, "and got me a wife and I was married. I went to hunt. I was going beside the sea, and I saw an island over in the loch, and I came where a boat was which had a rope before her and a rope behind, and many precious things within. I looked on the boat to see how I might get part of them. I put in the one foot, and the other foot was on the ground; and, when I raised my head, the boat was over in the middle of the loch, and she never stopped till she reached the island. When I went out of the boat, she returned to where she was before. I did not know what I should do. The place was without meat or clothing, without the appearance of a house on it. I raised out on the top of a hill. I came to a glen; I saw in it, at the bottom of a chasm, a woman who had got a child, and the child was naked on her knee. She had a knife in her hand and would attempt to put the knife in the throat of the babe, and the babe would begin to laugh in her face, and she would begin to cry and would throw the knife behind her. I thought to myself that I was near my foe and far from my friends, and I called to the woman, 'What art thou doing here?'

"She said to me, 'What brought thee here?'

"I told her word for word how I came.

" 'Well, then,' said she, 'it was how I came also.' She showed me the place where I could come in to where she was.

"I went in and I said to her, 'What was in fault that thou wert putting the knife to the neck of the child?'

" 'It is that he must be cooked for the giant who is here, or else no more of my world will be before me.'

"I went up steps of stairs and I saw a chamber full

of stripped corpses. I took a lump out of the corpse that was whitest, and I tied a string to the child's foot, and a string to the lump, and I put the lump in his mouth, and when it went in his throat, he would give a stretch to his leg, and he would take it out of his throat, but with the length of the thread he could not take it out of his mouth. I cast the child into a basket of down, and I asked her to cook the corpse for the giant in place of the child.

" 'How can I do that,' she said, 'when he has count of the corpses?'

" 'Do thou as I ask thee, and I will strip myself and I will go among the corpses, and then he will have the same count,' said I.

"She did as I asked her. We put the corpse in the great chaldron, but we could not put on the lid. When the giant was coming home I stripped myself and I went among the corpses. He came home, and she served up the corpse on a great platter, and when he ate it he was complaining that he found the corpse too tough for a child.

" 'I did as thou asked me,' said she. 'Thou hadst count of the corpses thyself. Go up now and count them.'

"He counted them and he had them. 'I see one white body there,' said he. 'I will lie down awhile and have him when I awake.' He rose and gripped me, and I never was in such a case as when he was hauling me down the stair with my head after me. He threw me into the chaldron, and he lifted the lid and put it on the chaldron. And now I was sure I would scald before I could get out of that. As fortune favoured me, the brute slept beside the chaldron. There I was, scalded by the bottom of the chaldron.

"When the woman perceived that the giant was

asleep, she set her mouth quietly to the hole that was in the lid and she said, was I alive?

"I put up my head, and the brute's forefinger was so large that my head went through easily, indeed everything was coming easily with me till I began to bring up my hips. I left the skin of my hips about the mouth of the hole but I came out.

"When I got out of the chaldron I knew not what to do; and she said to me that there was no weapon that would kill him but his own weapon. I began to draw his spear and every breath that he would draw I would think I would be down his throat, and when his breath came out I was back again, just so far. Spite of every ill that befell me I got the spear loosed from him. Then I was as one under a bundle of straw in a great wind, for I could not manage the spear. The brute had but one eye in the middle of his face and it was fearful to look on him. It was not agreeable for the like of me to attack him. I drew the dart as best I could and I set it in his eye. When he felt this he gave his head a lift, and he struck the other end of the dart on the top of the cave, and it went through to the back of his head. He fell cold dead where he was; and thou mayest be sure, oh, king, that joy was on me. I myself and the woman went out on clear ground, and we passed the night there. I went and fetched the boat with which I came, and she was no way lightened; and I took the woman and the child over to dry land; and I returned home."

The king's mother was putting on a fire at this time, and listening to Conall telling the tale about the child.

"Is it thou," said she, "that wert there?"

"Well, then," said he, "'twas I."

"Och! och!" said she, "'twas I that was there, and the king is the child whose life thou didst save; and it is to thee that life-thanks might be given."

Then they took great joy.

The king said, "Oh, Conall, thou camest through great hardships; and now the brown horse is thine, with a sack full of the most precious things that are in my treasury."

They lay down that night, and if it was early that Conall rose, it was earlier than that that the queen was on foot making ready.

Conall got the brown horse and the sack full of gold and silver and stones of great price, and then he and his four sons went away, and they returned home to the Eirinn realm of gladness. He left the gold and silver in his house and he went with the brown horse to the king.

They were good friends evermore. He returned home to his wife, and they set in order a feast; and that was a feast, oh, son and brother.

YOUNG PENNYMORE

By Neil Munro

OF the half-dozen men of Mid-Argyll condemned on one account or another for their part in the Rebellion, the last, and the least deserving of so scurvy a fate, was young John Clerk of Pennymore. He had been out in the affair more for the fun of the thing than from any high passion of politics; he would have fought as readily for the Duke as for the Young Pretender if the Duke had appealed to him first; he was a likeable lad to all who knew him, and the apple of his mother's eye.

The hanging of young John Clerk seemed at the time all the more harsh a measure since he was not charged directly with rebellion, but with being actor or art and part in the death of the Captain of Clonary,

who was shot on his way from Culloden by a gang of lurking Jacobites of whom the lad was one, and maybe innocent. The murderers scattered to the mist and to the sea. For six years Clerk sequestered in the land of France, and was caught at last in a tender filial hour when he had ventured home to see his folk. A squad of the Campbells found him skulking in the wood of Pennymore on the very afternoon of his return; he had not even had the time to see his people, and the trinkets and sweetmeats he had meant for his mother were strewn from his pockets among the bracken as he was being dragged before the Lords.

They looked at him—these dour and exigent gentlemen—with eyes that held no pity, not men at all for the nonce, but bowelless, inexorable legal mechanism; and Elchies, squeaking like a showman at a fair, sentenced him to the gallows.

"John Clerk," he said, "you have had an impartial trial; you have been defended by an able advocate, who has made the most of a wretched cause; the jury has found you guilty as libelled, and it only rests with this court to pronounce sentence accordingly. You may yet, during the brief period you have to live, best serve your country and your friends by warning them against those pernicious principles which have brought you to this untimely end, and may the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

Then the doomster declared doom—that young John Clerk be handed over to the Sheriff-Depute, hanged by the neck on the burgh gibbet at Creag-nan-caoraich on the 5th September, and thereafter left for a time in chains.

The lad made a bow to his judges, gave a last quick, eager glance about the court to assure himself his parents were not there, and then he was hurried down the trap-door to the cells.

There was still a month to go before the day of execution, and the Clerks of Pennymore—the proud and bitter dame and her pious husband—scoured the shire in search of sympathetic gentlemen of influence, and forswore sleep itself in their efforts to secure reprieve. They seemed, poor souls! miraculous in their great endurance, singly or together tramping here and there on a quest no neighbour dared to share, tragic to see upon the highway, horrible to hear at midnight when their cart went rumbling through the sleeping clachans. Sympathy was plentiful, but influence was shy, and the hopes of Pennymore were narrowed at last to Campbell of Lochgair, a lawyer himself, with the ear of His Grace and the Crown authorities.

Lochgair, more, as it strangely seemed, for the sake of the peevish dame than for her husband's, promised his active interest, and almost guaranteed release, and in the latter days of August went to Edinburgh to wait on the Lord Advocate, who was Prestongrange. It was the year of the stunted corn—1752—and never in the memory of man had been such inclement weather. The seas would seem to have forgotten the ways of peace; the glens were flooded, and the Highlands for a space were cut off from the Lowland world, and in a dreary privacy of storm. So the days passed —for most folk as if Time itself were bogged among the mire—for the man and wife in Pennymore as the flap of wings. They longed each evening for the morrow since it might bring welcome news, and yet they grudged the night and looked with terror on the dawn, since it brought the horrid hour a vigil closer.

And there were no tidings from Lochgair!

"I might have known! I might have known!—a traitor ever, like his clan!" cried the mother, all her patience drained to the bitter dregs, wringing her hands till the blood came to the knuckles. "Lochgair will

see the laddie hanged, and never jee his beaver. Too well I know his promises! We're here forgot, the pair of us, and all the world sleeping sound, no way put about at the thought of young John Clerk. Deserted of men! deserted of men!" and her cry rose like a dirge in their lonely dwelling.

"But not of God and His Grace," said her husband, shrinking before the fury of her eye. "I have trusted Lochgair in this with all my heart, and he cannot betray us. He knows that his breath is all that lies between our laddie and eternity."

"Oh, trust!" she hissed. "I ken the man; but I have trusted too, this fortnight, till my very heart is rent, yet God Himself cannot put off the 5th September."

"Yea, even that, if it be His will; our times are in His hands," said the pious husband, and turned him again to his Bible. But the woman's doubts were justified, and on the morning of the day before their son should perish, they yoked the horse and drove in the cart to the burgh town to see him for the first time in the cell he had shared with some doomed sheep-stealers.

Sixty miles lay between their home and the tolbooth gates, and yet it was in pitch-black night they came to the confines of the burgh, for they dreaded the pitying eyes of men and women. And all the way the woman fondled something in her plaid. They saw, afar, and few, and melancholy, wan lights in the burgh lands, blurred by the weeping rain; and at this spectacle—which told them the world went on its ordinary way and thought of breakfast, while their lad sat counting the hours, and they were engaged with misery—the man put his hand on the woman's shoulder with a grip of steel, and she gave the last sob that was ever heard from her. For ever after she was a woman

made of stone. The horse, as if it shared their feeling, stopped on the highway, reared itself in terror of something unseen, and snapped its belly-band, and the cart stood still under heaving beeches whose windy branches filled the dark with noise and cried down the very waves which roared on Creag-nan-caoraich.

The man jumped from the cart and fumbled with the harness, to find that further progress, wanting a girth, was not to be contemplated.

"I will walk into the town," he said, "and get a rope, if you sit here till I return. You will not mind my leaving you, Margaret?"

"Mind!" she exclaimed with bitterness; "I have learned my lesson, and there is no more to mind." But she fondled the thing concealed in her plaid, and her man walked quickly towards the wan lights of the tenements, leaving her all alone.

For a moment only she heard his footsteps, the sound of them soon lost in the din of nature—the uproar of the forest trees, whose ponderous branches creaked; the wind, canorous, blowing between the mountains; the booming crepitation of the sea upon the rocks. And yet no sense of solitude depressed her, for her mind was occupied by one triumphant thought—that young John Clerk should at least be spared the horror and shame of a public execution.

She had drawn, at first, the drenched plaid over her head to shield her and shut her in from the noise of tempest; but her hands in a little while were so busily engaged with her secret possession that the tartan screen at last rolled back on her shoulders, and she was aware of another sound than those of nature—the near, faint clang of chains. It was scarcely audible, but unmistakable—the beat of a loose end of iron links against wood, somewhere above her head, as she sat in the cart by the side of Creag-nan-caoraich. She

stared up into the darkness and saw nothing, then stood to her feet and felt above her with trembling hand.

Her fingers searched along a beam with a rope attached to it, whose meaning flooded to her brain with a gush that stunned; she touched a dead man's feet! and the pitiless clouds that had swept all night across the heavens heaved for a moment from the face of the reeling moon, and she saw the wretch upon the gibbet!

"My son! my son!" she screamed till the rocks and trees gave back the echo, and yet the distant lights of the burgh town glowed on with unconcern.

Her cries had ceased; she was sunk in a listless torpor in the bottom of the cart when her man returned in a state as wretched at her own, running with stumbling feet along the rutted highway.

"My God! my God!" said he, "I have learned of something dreadful!"

"I have learned it for myself," said his wife. "You're a day behind the fair."

"Not one day, but eleven of them," said her husband, hardly taking her meaning. "It is the fifteenth of September, and I'm so fearful of the worst. I dared not rap at a door in the town and ask."

"The fifteenth of September," she repeated dully; "we have not slept so sound this month back that we could miss a fortnight. Have you lost your reason?"

"I have seen a placard put up on the mercat cross," said her husband, with his brow upon the horse's back. "I read it in the light of the tolbooth windows, and it tells that the Government have decreed that the day after September 2nd should be September 14th. Eleven days are dropped; it is called—it is called the Gregorian Calendar, and I have forgotten about the rope."

The woman harshly laughed.

"Are you hearing me, Margaret?" he cried, putting up his arms to seize her, feeling some fresh terror.

"Gregorian here, Gregorian there!" she exclaimed. "Whose Calendar but the cursed Campbells', who have bonnily diddled me of my son! Our times are in God's hands, you said; you are witness now they are in the devil's!"

"But it may be I was right, and that this is our Father's miracle; John could not be—could not die but on the day appointed, and no such day, it seems, was on the Calendar. But I dared not ask, I dared not ask; I was dumfounded and ran to you, and here I am even without the rope."

Again the woman harshly laughed.

"You need not fash about the rope, goodman," said she; "at your very hand is plenty for your purpose, for there my son is, young John Clerk, and he hangs upon the tree."

The woman would not put a hand upon the body. Without her aid her husband lowered the burden from the gibbet, laid it in the cart and covered it with his plaid; and when a girth for the horse had been improvised from a part of the shameful halter, the two of them turned for home, walking side by side through the dawn that now was coming, slow and ashen, to the east.

The man was dumb, and walked without volition, wrestling with satanic doubts of a Holy Purpose that had robbed him of his son with such unnecessary and ghastly mockery; the woman cuddled her cold secret in her bosom, stared glassily at the coming day, and for a time let fury and despair whirl through her brain like poison vapours.

"I will never rest," she cried at last, "till Lochgair has paid the penalty for this trick upon us. My laddie's death is at his door!"

Her man said nothing, leading the horse.

"At his door!" she cried more vehemently. "Are you hearing me? He has slain my son in this shameful way as surely as if he had tied the rope himself."

Her husband made no answer; he found in her words but the thought of one for the time demented, and he walked appalled at the chaos into which the precious edifice of his faith had tumbled. Rudely she plucked his arm and screamed in his ear—

"What will you do to Campbell?"

"To Campbell?" he repeated vaguely. "God forgive him his false hopes and negligence, but it was not he who condemned our son."

"But for him," said the woman, "my son would have died like a gentleman, and not like a common thief."

"I do not understand," said her husband blankly.

"No, you never understand," she sneered, "that was ever your failing. Do you think that if I had not the promise of Lochgair, I should let my laddie die upon the gallows? The first of his race! the first of his race! I had brought with me his pistol that he might save himself the scandal of the doomster's hand," and she took the weapon from her bosom.

Her husband looked at it, grasped at once the Spartan spirit of her scheme, and swithered between chagrin that it had been foiled, and shame that the sin of self-slaughter should for a moment seem desirable.

"Oh, Margaret!" he cried, "you terrify me. Throw that dreadful weapon in the sea," and he made to take it from her, but she restored it to her plaid.

"No, no," she cried, "there may be use for it—"

"Use for it!" he repeated, and she poured into his ear the torrent of her hatred of Lochgair. "He could have won my laddie off," she said; "we had his own assurance. And if we had not put our trust in him, we

would have gone to others—Asknish or Stonefield, or the Duke himself—the Duke would have had some pity on a mother."

"Lochgair may have sore deceived us," said her husband, "yet he was but an instrument; our laddie's doom was a thing appointed from the start of Time."

"Then from the start of Time you were doomed to slay Lochgair."

"What! I?" quo' he.

"One or other of us. We are, it seems by your religion, all in the hands of fate and cannot help ourselves. Stand up like a man to this filthy Campbell, and give him the bullet that was meant for a better man."

"You are mad, goodwife," said her husband; "I would shed no man's blood."

"I speak not of men," said she, "but of that false fiend Lochgair who has kept us on the rack, and robbed Time itself of a fortnight to make his clan diversion. Oh, man! man! are you a coward? Challenge him to the moor; remember that at the worst my son who lies in the cart there could have died in decency and not at the doomster's hand if Lochgair had not misled us—"

"Woman!" cried her husband, "get behind me!" and took refuge in a gust of mumbled prayer.

They were now upon the Kenmore shore where the sea came deep against the rocks; no living soul had met them on their passage down the coast with their disgraceful burden, and alarmed at the prospect of encounter with any curious wayfarer, they drew the cart behind a thicket, to let an approaching horseman pass without his observation. Far off they heard the clatter of his horse's hoofs, and while yet he was a good way distant the questing eye of the woman saw

he wore a beaver hat, and a familiar coat with silver buttons!

"Look! look!" she cried, "here comes the very man, delivered to our hands."

"I will not touch him! I will not touch him!" said her husband, cowering behind the bushes.

"Then will I!" said she, and drew the pistol from her breast, and her husband wrestled with her for the weapon.

Lochgair in a furious haste came galloping, his vision engaged on the road before him, and would have swept on his way unnoticing the cart, its burden, or attendants, but for the altercation in the thicket. He checked his horse, turned round on the saddle, and peered among the branches, where the husband, breathing hard, had got possession of the weapon.

"He has slain my son, but I will spare him," said the husband, and the woman put her mouth against his ear.

"No son of yours," she whispered, "that is the curse of it!—but his own!"

"My God!" cried her husband, and fired at the horseman's breast. He fell like a sack of oats on the roadway, and his horse flew off among the brackens.

For a while the world seemed in a swound. In a swound the waves lapped up against the rocks; in a swound the leafage moved; in a swound the sea-birds cried, and the man and woman, desperate, sought to hide the evidence of their crime. They turned the dead man over on his back, emptied his pouches, filled his clothes with stones, then threw him, with the pistol, in the sea.

"Home! home!" the wife commanded, placing the dead man's papers in her plaid, and she walked, without remorse, by the side of her whimpering man, to Pennymore. She stirred the embers of the fire, and

one by one destroyed the dead man's documents, until the very last, and that she glanced at horror-stricken, for it was her son's reprieve!

With a scream she rushed outside and turned her husband's plaid from the face of the dead man in the cart—and it was not young John Clerk!

JANNITA

By Olive Schreiner

LITTLE Jannita sat alone beside a milk-bush. Before her and behind her stretched the plain, covered with red sand and thorny "Karroo" bushes; and here and there a milk-bush, looking like a bundle of pale green rods tied together. Not a tree was to be seen anywhere, except on the banks of the river, and that was far away, and the sun beat on her head. Round her fed the Angora goats she was herding; pretty things, especially the little ones, with white silky curls that touched the ground. But Jannita sat crying. If an angel should gather up in his cup all the tears that have been shed, I think the bitterest would be those of children.

By and by she was so tired, and the sun was so hot, she laid her head against the milk-bush, and dropped asleep.

She dreamed a beautiful dream. She thought that when she went back to the farmhouse in the evening, the walls were covered with vines and roses, and the "kraals" (*sheepfolds*) were not made of red stone, but of lilac trees full of blossom. And the fat old Boer smiled at her, and the stick he held across the door for the goats to jump over, was a lily rod with seven blossoms at the end. When she went to the house her mistress gave her a whole roaster-cake for her supper,

and the mistress's daughter had stuck a rose in the cake; and her mistress's son-in-law said "Thank you!" when she pulled off his boots, and did not kick her.

It was a beautiful dream.

While she lay thus dreaming, one of the little kids came and licked her on her cheek, because of the salt from her dried-up tears. And in her dream she was not a poor indentured child any more, living with Boers. It was her father who kissed her. He said he had only been asleep—that day when he lay down under the thorn-bush; he had not really died. He felt her hair, and said it was grown long and silky, and he said they would go back to Denmark now. He asked her why her feet were bare, and what the marks on her back were. Then he put her head on his shoulder, and picked her up, and carried her away, away! She laughed —she could feel her face against his brown beard. His arms were so strong.

As she lay there dreaming with the ants running over her naked feet, and with her brown curls lying in the sand, a Hottentot came up to her. He was dressed in ragged yellow trousers, and a dirty shirt, and torn jacket. He had a red handkerchief round his head, and a felt hat above that. His nose was flat, his eyes like slits, and the wool on his head was gathered into little round balls. He came to the milk-bush, and looked at the little girl lying in the hot sun. Then he walked off, and caught one of the fattest little Angora goats, and held its mouth fast, as he stuck it under his arm. He looked back to see that she was still sleeping, and jumped down into one of the "sluits." * He walked down the bed of the "sluit" a little way and came to an overhanging bank, under which, sitting on the red sand,

* The deep fissures, generally dry, in which the superfluous torrents of water are carried from the "Karroo" plains after thunderstorms.

were two men. One was a tiny, ragged, old Bushman, four feet high; the other was an English navvy, in a dark blue blouse. They cut the kid's throat with the navvy's long knife, and covered up the blood with sand, and buried the entrails and skin. Then they talked, and quarrelled a little; and then they talked quietly again.

The Hottentot man put a leg of the kid under his coat and left the rest of the meat for the two in the "sluit," and walked away.

When little Jannita awoke it was almost sunset. She sat up very frightened, but her goats were all about her. She began to drive them home. "I do not think there are any lost," she said.

Dirk, the Hottentot, had brought his flock home already, and stood at the "kraal" door with his ragged yellow trousers. The fat old Boer put his stick across the door, and let Jannita's goats jump over, one by one. He counted them. When the last jumped over: "Have you been to sleep today?" he said; "there is one missing."

Then little Jannita knew what was coming, and she said, in a low voice, "No." And then she felt in her heart that deadly sickness that you feel when you tell a lie; and again she said, "Yes."

"Do you think you will have any supper this evening?" said the Boer.

"No," said Jannita.

"What do you think you will have?"

"I don't know," said Jannita.

"Give me your whip," said the Boer to Dirk, the Hottentot.

The moon was all but full that night. Oh, but its light was beautiful!

The little girl crept to the door of the outhouse

where she slept, and looked at it. When you are hungry, and very, very sore, you do not cry. She leaned her chin on one hand, and looked, with her great dove's eyes—the other hand was cut open, so she wrapped it in her pinafore. She looked across the plain at the sand and the low karroo-bushes, with the moonlight on them.

Presently, there came slowly, from far away, a wild spring-buck. It came close to the house, and stood looking at it in wonder, while the moonlight glinted on its horns, and in its great eyes. It stood wondering at the red brick walls, and the girl watched it. Then, suddenly, as if it scorned it all, it curved its beautiful back and turned; and away it fled over the bushes and sand, like a sheeny streak of white lightning. She stood up to watch it. So free, so free! Away, away! She watched, till she could see it no more on the wide plain.

Her heart swelled, larger, larger, larger: she uttered a low cry; and without waiting, pausing, thinking, she followed on its track. Away, away, away! "I—I also!" she said, "I—I also!"

When at last her legs began to tremble under her, and she stopped to breathe, the house was a speck behind her. She dropped on the earth, and held her panting sides.

She began to think now.

If she stayed on the plain they would trace her footsteps in the morning and catch her; but if she waded in the water in the bed of the river they would not be able to find her footmarks; and she would hide, there where the rocks and the "kopjes" * were.

So she stood up and walked towards the river. The

* "Kopjes," in the karroo, are hillocks of stones, that rise up singly or in clusters, here and there, presenting sometimes the fantastic appearance of old ruined castles or giant graves, the work of human hands.

water in the river was low; just a line of silver in the broad bed of sand, here and there broadening into a pool. She stepped into it, and bathed her feet in the delicious cold water. Up and up the stream she walked, where it rattled over the pebbles, and past where the farmhouse lay; and where the rocks were large, she leaped from one to the other. The night wind in her face made her strong—she laughed. She had never felt such night wind before. So the night smells to the wild bucks, because they are free! A free thing feels as a chained thing never can.

At last she came to a place where the willows grew on each side of the river, and trailed their long branches on the sandy bed. She could not tell why, she could not tell the reason, but a feeling of fear came over her.

On the left bank rose a chain of "kopjes" and a precipice of rocks. Between the precipice and the river bank there was a narrow path covered by the fragments of fallen rock. And upon the summit of the precipice a kippersol tree grew, whose palm-like leaves were clearly cut out against the night sky. The rocks cast a deep shadow, and the willow trees, on either side of the river. She paused, looked up and about her, and then ran on, fearful.

"What was I afraid of? How foolish I have been!" she said, when she came to a place where the trees were not so close together. And she stood still and looked back and shivered.

At last her steps grew wearier and wearier. She was very sleepy now, she could scarcely lift her feet. She stepped out of the river-bed. She only saw that the rocks about her were wild, as though many little "kopjes" had been broken up and strewn upon the ground, lay down at the foot of an aloe, and fell asleep.

But, in the morning, she saw what a glorious place

it was. The rocks were piled on one another, and tossed this way and that. Prickly pears grew among them, and there were no less than six kippersol trees scattered here and there among the broken "kopjes." In the rocks there were hundreds of homes for the coneys, and from the crevices wild asparagus hung down. She ran to the river, bathed in the clear cold water, and tossed it over her head. She sang aloud. All the songs she knew were sad, so she could not sing them now, she was glad, she was so free; but she sang the notes without the words, as the cock-o-veets do. Singing and jumping all the way, she went back, and took a sharp stone, and cut at the root of a kippersol, and got out a large piece, as long as her arm, and sat to chew it. Two coneys came out on the rock above her head and peeped at her. She held them out a piece, but they did not want it, and ran away.

It was very delicious to her. Kippersol is like raw quince, when it is very green; but she liked it. When good food is thrown at you by other people, strange to say, it is very bitter; but whatever you find yourself is sweet!

When she had finished she dug out another piece, and went to look for a pantry to put it in. At the top of a heap of rocks up which she clambered she found that some large stones stood apart but met at the top, making a room.

"Oh, this is my little home!" she said.

At the top and all round it was closed, only in the front it was open. There was a beautiful shelf in the wall for the kippersol, and she scrambled down again. She brought a great branch of prickly pear, and stuck it in a crevice before the door, and hung wild asparagus over it, till it looked as though it grew there. No one could see that there was a room there, for she left only a tiny opening, and hung a branch of feathery as-

paragus over it. Then she crept in to see how it looked. There was a glorious soft green light. Then she went out and picked some of those purple little ground flowers—you know them—those that keep their faces close to the ground, but when you turn them up and look at them they are deep blue eyes looking into yours! She took them with a little earth, and put them in the crevices between the rocks; and so the room was quite furnished. Afterwards she went down to the river and brought her arms full of willow, and made a lovely bed; and, because the weather was very hot, she lay down to rest upon it.

She went to sleep soon, and slept long, for she was very weak. Late in the afternoon she was awakened by a few cold drops falling on her face. She sat up. A great and fierce thunderstorm had been raging, and a few of the cool drops had fallen through the crevice in the rocks. She pushed the asparagus branch aside, and looked out, with her little hands folded about her knees. She heard the thunder rolling, and saw the red torrents rush among the stones on their way to the river. She heard the roar of the river as it now rolled, angry and red, bearing away stumps and trees on its muddy water. She listened and smiled, and pressed closer to the rock that took care of her. She pressed the palm of her hand against it. When you have no one to love you, you love the dumb things very much. When the sun set, it cleared up. Then the little girl ate some kippersol, and lay down again to sleep. She thought there was nothing so nice as to sleep. When one has had no food but kippersol juice for two days, one doesn't feel strong.

"It is so nice here," she thought, as she went to sleep, "I will stay here always."

Afterwards the moon rose. The sky was very clear now, there was not a cloud anywhere; and the moon

shone in through the bushes in the door, and made a lattice-work of light on her face. She was dreaming a beautiful dream. The loveliest dreams of all are dreamed when you are hungry. She thought she was walking in a beautiful place, holding her father's hand, and they both had crowns on their heads, crowns of wild asparagus. The people whom they passed smiled and kissed her; some gave her flowers, and some gave her food, and the sunlight was everywhere. She dreamed the same dream over and over, and it grew more and more beautiful; till, suddenly, it seemed as though she were standing quite alone. She looked up: on one side of her was the high precipice, on the other was the river, with the willow trees drooping their branches into the water; and the moonlight was over all. Up against the night sky the pointed leaves of the kippersol trees were clearly marked, and the rocks and the willow trees cast dark shadows.

In her sleep she shivered, and half awoke.

"Ah, I am not there, I am here," she said; and she crept closer to the rock, and kissed it, and went to sleep again.

It must have been about three o'clock, for the moon had begun to sink towards the western sky, when she woke, with a violent start. She sat up, and pressed her hand against her heart.

"What can it be? A coney must surely have run across my feet and frightened me!" she said, and she turned to lie down again; but soon she sat up. Outside, there was the distinct sound of thorns crackling in a fire.

She crept to the door and made an opening in the branches with her fingers.

A large fire was blazing in the shadow, at the foot of the rocks. A little Bushman sat over some burning coals that had been raked from it, cooking meat.

Stretched on the ground was an Englishman, dressed in a blouse, and with a heavy, sullen face. On the stone beside him was Dirk, the Hottentot, sharpening a bowie knife.

She held her breath. Not a coney in all the rocks was so still.

"They can never find me here," she said; and she knelt, and listened to every word they said. She could hear it all.

"You may have all the money," said the Bushman; "but I want the cask of brandy. I will set the roof alight in six places, for a Dutchman burnt my mother once alive in a hut, with three children."

"You are sure there is no one else on the farm?" said the navvy.

"No, I have told you till I am tired," said Dirk; "the two Kaffirs have gone with the son to town; and the maids have gone to a dance; there is only the old man and the two women left."

"But suppose," said the navvy, "he should have the gun at his bedside, and loaded!"

"He never has," said Dirk; "it hangs in the passage, and the cartridges too. He never thought when he bought it what work it was for! I only wish the little white girl was there still," said Dirk; "but she is drowned. We traced her footmarks to the great pool that has no bottom."

She listened to every word, and they talked on.

Afterwards, the little Bushman, who crouched over the fire, sat up suddenly, listening.

"Ha! what is that?" he said.

A Bushman is like a dog: his ear is so fine he knows a jackal's tread from a wild dog's.

"I heard nothing," said the navvy.

"I heard," said the Hottentot; "but it was only a coney on the rocks."

"No coney, no coney," said the Bushman; "see, what is that there moving in the shade round the point?"

"Nothing! you idiot," said the navvy. "Finish your meat; we must start now."

There were two roads to the homestead. One went along the open plain, and was by far the shortest; but you might be seen half a mile off. The other ran along the river bank, where there were rocks, and holes, and willow-trees to hide among. And all down the river bank ran a little figure.

The river was swollen by the storm full to its banks, and the willow-trees dipped their half-drowned branches into its water. Wherever there was a gap between them, you could see it flow, red and muddy, with the stumps upon it. But the little figure ran on and on; never looking, never thinking; panting, panting! There, where the rocks were the thickest; there, where on the open space the moonlight shone; there, where the prickly pears were tangled, and the rocks cast shadows, on it ran; the little hands clenched, the little heart beating, the eyes fixed always ahead.

It was not far to run now. Only the narrow path between the high rocks and the river.

At last she came to the end of it, and stood for an instant. Before her lay the plain, and the red farmhouse, so near, that if persons had been walking there you might have seen them in the moonlight. She clasped her hands. "Yes, I will tell them, I will tell them!" she said; "I am almost there!" She ran forward again, then hesitated. She shaded her eyes from the moonlight, and looked. Between her and the farmhouse there were three figures moving over the low bushes.

In the sheeny moonlight you could see how they moved on, slowly and furtively; the short one, and the one in light clothes, and the one in dark.

"I cannot help them now!" she cried, and sank down on the ground, with her little hands clasped before her.

"Awake, awake!" said the farmer's wife; "I hear a strange noise; something calling, calling, calling!"

The man rose, and went to the window.

"I hear it also," he said; "surely some jackal's at the sheep. I will load my gun and go and see."

"It sounds to me like the cry of no jackal," said the woman; and when he was gone she woke her daughter.

"Come, let us go and make a fire, I can sleep no more," she said; "I have heard a strange thing to-night. Your father said it was a jackal's cry, but no jackal cries so. It was a child's voice, and it cried, 'Master, master, wake!' "

The women looked at each other; then they went to the kitchen, and made a great fire; and they sang psalms all the while.

At last the man came back; and they asked him, "What have you seen?" "Nothing," he said, "but the sheep asleep in their kraals, and the moonlight on the walls. And yet, it did seem to me," he added, "that far away near the 'krantz' [precipice] by the river, I saw three figures moving. And afterwards—it might have been fancy—I thought I heard the cry again; but since that, all has been still there."

Next day a navvy had returned to the railway works.

"Where have you been so long?" his comrades asked.

"He keeps looking over his shoulder," said one, "as though he thought he should see something there."

"When he drank his grog today," said another, "he let it fall, and looked round."

Next day, a small old Bushman, and a Hottentot, in ragged yellow trousers, were at a wayside canteen. When the Bushman had had brandy, he began to tell

how something (he did not say whether it was man, woman, or child) had lifted up its hands and cried for mercy; had kissed a white man's hands, and cried to him to help it. Then the Hottentot took the Bushman by the throat, and dragged him out.

Next night, the moon rose up, and mounted the quiet sky. She was full now, and looked in at the little home; at the purple flowers stuck about the room, and the kippersol on the shelf. Her light fell on the willow-trees, and on the high rocks, and on a little new-made heap of earth and round stones. Three men knew what was under it; and no one else ever will.

A SACK FOR NINEPENCE

By Sarah Gertrude Millin

I

THE tall Kaffir with his dirty shirt and trousers, the colour of mud, with his greenish-brown coat and dusty pepper-corn hair and bare feet, stood in the dock, and his eyes were concentrated on the interpreter. The interpreter was translating to him the judge's concluding remarks to the jury:

". . . On the other hand, gentlemen, you must bear in mind, as the learned counsel for the defence has pointed out, that when a Kaffir says he will kill a man, he is not necessarily threatening to take his life. He may only mean that he will hurt him. The expression 'You shall not see the sun to-morrow' is another such exclamation of rage which may have no real significance. Moreover, it must be remembered that the principal testimony against the prisoner is that of his wife, Masangape, who has lost her child, and who has been badly treated by him. The matter of the stone has not been satisfactorily explained, yet there is no evi-

dence that the prisoner placed it where it was found, nor did anyone see the burning of the hut. The child is dead. The man who wore the sack is dead. All the inhabitants of the hut are dead. Only Masangape, the wife, is here to tell the story of that day and night. It is for you to say whether you believe Masangape, and whether in the light of the other evidence I have outlined to you, you think the prisoner committed this crime. If you find the evidence insufficient to establish his guilt beyond reasonable doubt, it is your duty to find him not guilty. Consider your verdict. . . ."

Pepetwayo listened to the interpreter, but he could discover no meaning in the judge's words. The jurymen scrambled to their feet. The judge gathered together his red robes and stood up, and, as he did so, the people in court—mostly Kaffirs—rose. The policeman touched the prisoner's arm. The Kaffir gave a start, looked round with rolling eyes, and, on the policeman's word, began hurriedly to descend the steps that led from the dock to the cells below.

He was still thinking about the sack.

II

This was the story of the sack:

Pepetwayo had married his wife when she was a widow with a year-old child. And it was now seven years since their marriage, and this child she had borne another man was still the only child in their hut. Pepetwayo spoke to her about it often, and sometimes he beat her. He consulted a witch-doctor and he fought men who made jokes, but the days passed and the days passed and forever he had to father only this child of the dead man.

He grew to hate the child with a terrible deep hatred. He could not bear to see the small white teeth crunching the bread for which he had to break his back

hauling up stones on the Transvaal diamond diggings. In summer Gule ran naked, but this winter he had been bought a thick cotton singlet, and Pepetwayo could not rest his eyes on it without wanting to tear it from the boy's back. He could not keep his voice from scolding him or his hands from striking him. He said to Masangape in their native speech: "Send Gule away, or there will be great trouble."

She decided finally to bestow Gule on some friends in a neighbouring hut. It was, like all the other huts, a circular construction of rags and reeds and mud, a dozen feet in diameter, with no opening for entrance or exit but a flap of sacking. It stood, surrounded by a reed fence, on the side of a low, stony hill, a little apart from the rest of the location where Masangape lived with her husband. In the whole of that location there was no tree or flower or blade of grass. There was no well for water. Little girls, with tin cans on their heads, walked three miles to fetch the muddy water of the Vaal River. Only on the top of the hill there grew, near the half-hearted and abandoned beginnings of a stone wall, a few prickly pears, and, when the sun went down in a flare of scarlet scribbled with fire, these bold and fleshy weeds leaned against the sky in black relief, and the huts themselves clung together like the hives of gigantic wasps.

In this hut there were already five people maintained on the sixteen shillings a week earned by the head of the household. But no Kaffir ever questions the right of a fellow-tribesman to share with him, and Gule was accepted without bargain or comment.

Yet only for a few days was there peace in Pepetwayo's home. It happened that he returned from his work on the diggings and Masangape was not there. Where she was he knew, of course. But he particularly resented her absence this evening because he was

happy, because he wanted her to exult with him over a bargain. He had bought a grain-sack from the shop for ninepence when everyone knew that the price of one so large as this was always a shilling. But he had said to the store-keeper: "Look, Baas, how poor I am, and how the weather is cold. I want this sack to wear on my body to keep the wind out. But it is Monday to-day and I have just this ninepence, and why shall such a great person as the Baas wait till next Saturday for only a little threepence? Let the Baas give me the sack for ninepence."

And, actually, the Baas had done it, and Pepetwayo loved the sack as if it were a trophy in a game he had won.

Now he wanted his wife to open the sides for him and cut a hole for his head so that he might wear it against the cold. He could work better with his hands than she could—he had in his day sewn together the skins of jackals with sinew to make those great rugs which are called *karosses*—but it simply was his desire that she should do this thing for him.

And the hut was empty. There was no fat-soaked mealie-meal cooking in the tripod pot. His belly was fainting against his backbone, for he had eaten nothing all day except, at twelve o'clock, a piece of bread. There was no one to share his triumph about the sack.

He flung it down in a corner of the hut, and rushed over to the neighbours who housed Gule.

There his wife sat chattering with other women. There his wife's child ran about playing with other children. The air was leaping with gaiety. The terrific smell of a sheep's head and trotters cooking in a tripod pot attacked his nostrils. . . .

He thought of his quiet hut, of his unused pot, of the absence of small, rotund, black bodies and rushing

noises and high laughter in his yard, of his bargain of a sack lying rumpled, unhailed, in a corner, and he ran up to his wife and jerked her up by the shoulder and shouted awful words at her and dragged her home.

He beat her when they got home, and would not eat, and would not let her make in the hut the smoky fire of dung and sticks with which they kept themselves warm in the winter nights. And throughout the black hours, wearing still the clothes they used by day, they lay side by side on the goatskins which separated them from the naked earth, covered with two cotton blankets, bitter, hostile, and yet drawn together by the cold.

In the morning Pepetwayo went to work as usual, a white scurf of frost on his face and hands. And when he was gone, his wife packed her belongings into the sack she found lying in the corner and left him, to go and live in the hut that sheltered also her child.

III

Pepetwayo was hungry and tired and cold all day long. And for this he blamed his wife and her child. If his wife had not neglected him the night before to go to see her child, he would have had something in his belly, he thought, he would have slept in the night, he would have been able to wear the sack to-day against the whipping wind. He could not forget the animation in the other people's yard.

In the evening he walked towards the location, picking up here and there as he went along a stick for the fire. But again, as he reached home, no smoke rose to greet him, and he saw soon enough that Masangape was gone, and her belongings. He stood in the hut looking at he knew not what, and suddenly he remembered his sack. Where was his sack? Had she had the effrontery to take his sack, to steal his sack for which only the day before he had paid ninepence . . .

not a shilling, as was usual, but—a bargain, a diplomatic achievement—ninepence?

Once more he ran along to the other hut. This time there was no visitor in the yard, only the inhabitants of the hut were present, and his wife was sitting, silent, in their midst. She was frightened. She could not live with her husband any more, and she did not know what he would now do to her.

But he entered in among them shouting the word "sack." "Give me my sack. What have you done with my sack?"

He pulled his wife up by the stuff of her dress between her shoulders.

"You—"

His eyes fell on the child.

"He shall not see the sun to-morrow!" he cried. "There will not be cause for you to leave me again. Where is my sack?"

His wife looked at him dumbly.

He let her go, for his eyes had seen something. There was a man barely visible in the smoke-filled hut and he was wearing a baggy garment over his shoulders. Pepetwayo sprang at the man, and they struggled towards the yard. He could see now, in the last light of day, that the man was the brother of Gule's protector, and that here was his very sack.

He attempted to pull it from the man as they fought. "You shall not," he panted, "you shall—none of you—see the sun to-morrow."

The sack was torn. His own clothes were torn. People flung themselves forward and separated them. He threatened to kill his wife if she did not come back with him. She walked beside him, weeping.

And, as on the night before they lay down together on the ground in the small, dark hut.

But this time, in the middle of the night, Pepetwayo got up, and began fumbling about the hut.

His wife lay still, listening to his movements. Then she felt that—something—was happening. Terror filled her.

"Pepetwayo! What are you doing?"

"Nothing," he said, in a voice unexpectedly peaceable.

She heard the rattle of matches as in the dark he put his hand on the box.

Now he went outside. She sat up.

"Pepetwayo! Where are you going? Pepetwayo!"

He came back to the hut.

"Lie still. I will be here again in a minute."

She began to moan.

"Are you mad?" he said. "Be quiet. I am not going to leave you for long. Wait for me. Don't make this noise. If I do not find you here when I come in I will kill you."

She drew the blankets over her head, and lay waiting and shivering.

He was gone for minutes—for an hour.

When he returned he put his arms round her.

"I am happy again. Let us sleep," he said.

IV

In the morning the hut that contained Gule and the man who had worn Pepetwayo's sack and four other people was found burnt down, and everyone in it was dead. A stone was lying against the flap that was the only opening to the hut, and the inhabitants had thus been fastened in while the old sacks and reeds of which the hut was made burnt round them and over them.

Masangape was led, screaming, to the police-station to tell her story. Pepetwayo was arrested. "I know nothing," he said. The police did not question him, and when, towards the end of the six months that inter-

vened before his trial, his young counsel came to talk with him he maintained firmly: "I know nothing."

At the trial he was not put in the box. And when he gathered dimly that the defending advocate was explaining to the jury how ridiculous it was that a man should kill six people for the sake of an empty sack, he nodded his head slightly. Yes, that was wise talk. "I need not inform you, gentlemen," the advocate continued, "how often native huts are burnt down, or how often sleeping natives are suffocated because the fire made for warmth has not been removed . . ."

The judge addressed the jury. Pepetwayo was led back to his cell. The jury went away to deliberate.

They returned presently. The prisoner was once more prodded up the steps to the dock. The judge, who had retired, assumed his seat on the bench. The people in court duly stood up and sat down.

The registrar addressed the foreman of the jury.

"Have you considered your verdict?"

"We have."

"Are you all agreed?"

"We are."

"What is your verdict?"

"Not guilty."

The judge addressed Pepetwayo. He had put the facts as he saw them before the jury, though it was reasonably clear to him that Pepetwayo had committed the crime. However, they had apparently considered the evidence insufficient.

He sat up and looked at Pepetwayo from under his heavy brow. "The jury have found you not guilty. You may go."

"You may go," the interpreter translated.

The policeman tapped his shoulder.

"You may go."

Pepetwayo looked from one to the other. What

had happened? Was he free? He could not believe it.

"Hurry up," said the policeman.

The native did not move.

The policeman pushed him. The man began to scramble down as if an hypnotic influence were directing him.

Outside the court other Kaffirs surrounded Pepetwayo, giving him tobacco to chew and cigarettes.

He was free. He was a hero. The justice of the white man was a miracle.

He blew out a mouthful of smoke, and in a voice hushed by six months of waiting in gaol, he began to tell his worshipful audience about this sack, worth a shilling, which he had bought for ninepence, and which had been given by his wife to the brother of the man who had sheltered Gule.

THREE SKETCHES

By Halidé Edib

I. THE STORY OF THE EFFE

WHEN the Effé heard that the International Commission was willing to listen to him, he rose and seriously examined his appearance. In his black eyes was neither excitement nor emotion. He got up slowly from the sofa on which he had been sitting with his legs crossed and, leaving behind his tobacco pouch, went silently from the room. The young officer saw him shake his head queerly once or twice, and this made him think. He felt more excited and nervous than the Effé, was indeed afraid of the coming interview. Yet such an interview might save Smyrna, that city of tragedy with its dried-up fields, its withered flowers and the ruins wherein its

human inhabitants were being done to death. It was the officer's duty to accompany those who were to be interviewed by the Commission. Each time he closed the door behind one of them and seated himself outside to wait, his heart beat wildly and he uttered speeches with which in those anxious moments his mind supplied him. He was a sensitive and somewhat intellectual youth from Constantinople, and he was longing to make the victorious generals and admirals understand the tragedy of ruined Smyrna.

But this simple Effé, the first key of the people's defence, had taken the news quietly and even coldly. How could he be helped to bring out the point of view of the new movement, to do it in the most effective way? He, the officer, would prepare a speech and make the Effé learn it.

His mind worked on the speech and had composed about half—a speech strong enough to make even generals weep—when the door opened and the Effé entered. He wore his brightest and most elegant suit and vest; his fez was ornamented with the thousand-and-one-mountain-flower design; his thick, strong body was adorned with pistols, silver-handled knives and rapiers, while a gun hung at his back. Above this collection of arms, shining and ready for use, his head appeared solid and steady. So white, so marble-firm was his skin that the burning sun of Aidin had been able to bronze it only slightly. From the strong face with its regular lines and rather thin nose, the deepset eyes gazed like dark flames. The thick neck rose from the shirt collar whiter than the face. It carried a head well-poised and manly and, above the womanish lips, grew a small black moustache. In spite of the youth and the freshness of the Effé, who was said to be only twenty-one years old, he had a mature air unrelated to age.

To break the silence the officer remarked:

"Our way is rather long, my Effé."

The Effé's lips parted in something like a smile but his eyes retained their fixed and calm expression. "I know where it is," he said.

In vain the young officer tried on the way to obtain an insight into the Effé's mind. He was courteous but evidently wished to remain silent.

The room where the Commission sat was covered with Ushak carpets. A rectangular table was covered with a green cloth and near it sat the generals of the four Powers, an impressive sight, as they were in uniform. Surrounded with officers and secretaries, the four heads, with their strongly featured faces, stood out proudly, the eyes focussed on the Effé. Their eyes symbolized their powerful and victorious countries, clad in the majesty of dreadnoughts and other death machines. But the Effé, unaffected by this manifestation of force, stood before them, indifferent as a young oak with its green head reaching the sky.

As the Effé advanced, a Turkish officer with dark cheeks and a Kalpak rose on his right. Moved by some anxiety which the Effé could not understand, he placed his gun against the wall and laid his pistols one by one on the table. As he did so he gazed at the generals with eyes containing neither malice, revolt nor fear and said in a clear voice:

"Welcome, O Pashas!"

The Effé realized that these were the Pashas of nations against whom the Turkish soldiers had fought in the Dardanelles. It was on account of their rank that the Effé had decorated his head with the thousand-and-one-mountain-flowers design and worn his new vest. To them he showed the respect owing, he considered, to a Pasha who would come to the mountains of Aidin

to enquire into what was happening there. In his simple way, he took the chair assigned to him.

The Pashas having mumbled something he did not understand, the Turkish officer said:

"Tell us what happened in Aidin, Effé."

He began at once. "I had heard that the Greeks had taken Smyrna by surprise, that they had robbed the shops and the houses, that they had killed women and children, that they had violated the women. This we had heard long ago, but we were shepherds with sheep on the mountains. Though we had heard about this we continued, as before, to drive our sheep to the pastures.

"The Greeks had entered the farms, dragged out the old men by their beards, cut the young to pieces, burned property and taken the animals away. We heard of these things and still went on driving our sheep to the mountains.

"The Greeks were advancing toward the interior. They had left neither tobacco plants nor corn stalks in the fields. They had burnt the olive orchards and trampled down the vines. The nuts, the figs, all the fruit had fallen and had decayed; in the country no one was left to take care of his belongings, but the towns were crowded like the Judgment Day. We still went on driving our sheep to the pastures on the mountains.

"One day the Greeks came very near. We heard that one of their guards had been stationed on the other side of the Menderness Bridge. Then we, in the village, began to ponder. On Friday, after prayers, we went off with the boys to hunt. On our return in the twilight, we saw people in a group. It was the girls who keep the lambs on the village hills who stood before us. Their head veils were in pieces, their hair torn, their dresses blood-stained and muddy. All were

weeping. My cousin Kezeban took her head veil and threw it in our faces:

"'Effé,' she said, 'the Greeks entered Smyrna, but you were silent; they robbed the Moslems, still you were silent. They are in your houses now, yet you, with guns in your hands and ornaments on your fezes, you hunt on the mountains. The Greek soldiers caught us by Menderness bridge today. They stole our sheep, they tore our gold coins from our dresses, from our necks. . . .'

"The women wailed together; my cousin Kezeban's dress was in rags, and blood leaked from her breasts. All the boys cried to them:

"'What more have they done?' and the Imam's daughter answered:

"'Don't ask us what they have done, rather ask us what more they will do,' and taking off her veil she, also, threw it in our faces, crying:

"'Take these and veil yourselves! Give us the knives and the guns. Henceforth we will defend the honour of the women.'

"We sent the girls home and on the threshold of the village we took oath with the boys to clear away those dogs on Menderness Bridge.

"During the night my cousin Kezeban sent me her young sister with a message. 'She sends word to you not to leave alive the lean dark Greek with protruding teeth. He has black hair sticking out from beneath his hat.'

"As we were cleaning out the traitors, the violators, cleaning them out with pistol, rifle and knives, the Zeibeks from the neighbouring villages came to us, helping. On the other hand the Greek soldiers appeared as thick as a cloud, although soon they flew like wild duck from the knives of the boys. I searched among the dead for the black-haired Greek with the protrud-

ing teeth, but could not find him. We followed the flying cloud of Greeks. When we reached Aidin it was the time for evening prayers. We laid our arms on the outskirts of the town and sat down. We did not know what we were to do next.

"Flames broke out in Aidin, from within followed the reports of rifles. Cries of women and children and the shouting of Greeks reached our ears. We entered the town like wind. The Moslem quarters were crackling and burning, the people were wailing. The flames extended like branches from roof to roof, bundles of rags fell from the windows to Greeks who were waiting below. Snatching them up they ran. I saw an old granny, her veil in strips, being dragged by a Greek soldier from stone to stone. He was trying to tear the gold coins from her neck. Another Greek, with both hands on her throat, was choking and kissing a young girl, whose dress had been torn open, showing her breasts. A girl as small as this," he gestured with his hands, "was trying to bite a soldier who was killing her mother, until another dashed out her brains with the butt of his gun.

"In the midst of fire and smoke, blood and wailing, we entered like the wind . . . like hell."

The Effé rose from his chair. The generals had not listened to the interpreter, they had only watched the Effé's face. It had no lines or contractions but seemed to have become millions of years old. His eyes were two black, boiling springs. Although his cheeks were dry, his eyes were full of black tears.

His voice had fallen so low that the words coming from his mouth had almost no sound. Like a clear, strong whisper they issued, not in sound but in tragic images which lived, which could not only be heard but seen.

"Three hours, Pashas, three hours we did what men

ought not to do. At last the Greeks left and the fire was put out. Then we found ourselves."

He looked into the eyes of the generals as if nothing had happened.

"Good-bye, O Pashas," he said.

II. AMONG THE CHILDREN I KNEW

One was an Arab, the other a Turk; one a girl, the other a boy. But I think of them as creatures with twin souls and as such I love them. For them I have a feeling of intimacy and a pathetic respect.

I met the one during the first years of the War. It was winter. Already at half past four the dark had set in. As I left the tram at Turbé, I was wondering how to carry the fruit-tins I held in my hand. Among the crowd descending from the car I observed, flitting away, two bare feet as small as a child's palms. A thin voice called, "Terdjuman!" A newspaper boy selling his wares—and between the swift flash of the passing car and the darkness of the surrounding streets, the owner of the voice caught my eye. He was a tiny being with a thin face and a pale round mouth, which even when he was silent retained its shouting expression. As I caught him by the shoulder, its fragility woke in me an unusual tenderness.

"Will you carry my packages for me?"

"I have to sell the papers, lady aunt."

I persuaded him that my errand would bring a surer profit. He put the papers under his arms and made an attempt to gather the tins into his emaciated hands. The contrast between the size of the parcels and the hands made me feel obliged to help. We carried them together, he walking in front and I following closely and bending over him. As we passed the brilliantly lighted Municipal Building, going forward into the dark, windy, sloping street, I began to find the position

difficult. It would have been easier for me to have carried the parcels by myself. Nevertheless, the occasional touch of this strange, bare, childish head on my breast and the elegant light air with which the small feet slid along the cold stones, stirred in me something maternal, something that had in it both pleasure and pain.

"What is thy name?"

"Rustem."

"Where is thy house?"

"In Shehzade-Bashi."

"Hast thou a mother?"

"Of course."

"Brother, sisters?"

He stopped and counted aloud. "One, two, three."

"An older brother?"

He shook his head. "All are younger. I am the oldest. And all are girls. One is not yet weaned."

"Hast thou a father?"

"He went to the War last year and we have had no news."

"Does thy mother work?"

"How could she, lady aunt? She is ill."

"Who takes care of her? I mean of you all?"

This time his feet struck the cold stones rebelliously and he stopped, surprised and hurt. To dominate the wailing of the north wind in the sloping street, he raised his little voice to an irritated pitch and, with astonishing vigour and pride, shouted,

"Am I not taking care of my mother?"

His voice tore something in me. But although my eyes were wet I affected a tone of gaiety,

"Tell me how thou supportest her."

And he told me. He sold newspapers, *Ikdam* and *Tasvir* in the morning, and his profits were five piastres. To see the effect on me of this remarkable fact he

turned his face, searching mine. In the afternoon he carried parcels and made as much as seven piastres, while late in the evening, he again sold papers—*Terdjuman*. His daily gain was from fifteen to twenty piastres. Since at that time, the price of bread was not more than three piastres, this sounded satisfactory, indeed as he told me of these things his little head felt itself to be on a higher level than mine.

I had been intensely conscious of those bare feet on the cold stones and I remarked suddenly:

"Hast thou any shoes, Rustem?"

He chuckled in a funny way. Like an old person he had learned to laugh at life. Shoes after all were not essential.

"Our neighbour lent me a pair of shoes. But I cannot run with them on. Besides they would wear out, so I have them in my belt."

I was curious to see the borrowed shoes he did not want to wear out. I leaned over and looked at his belt. Two large wooden clogs were stuck in it like two revolvers. As he saw me look he laughed in my eyes and the grin sweetened his thin face with a humour which had in it both pathos and maturity.

We had reached my house. I told him of my own boys and invited him to come in and see them. He thought lingeringly for a moment, then shook his head with vigour. No, he never visited people, besides he was busy that night. But some other time he might come. He was sincere in his promise, for I saw his dark eyes scanning the street to mark the position of the house. I patted his head as we separated and he called out sweetly:

"Good-bye, lady aunt."

The small shrill cry of *Terdjuman,* grew faint and fainter in the distance.

For a long time I waited eagerly for Rustem's visit,

but days passed and he did not come. As the price of bread rose higher and higher I thought of him with an aching heart.

During my stay in Syria, the sight of the tragic misery and famine there brought Rustem into my mind with a vivid remembrance of our short meeting. Hardly nine years old and supporting four mouths in those horrible times. I thought that by then, his heroic face with its beautiful hazel eyes, might be turned to heaven in bitter questioning from some lost cemetery of Ederne Kapou.* But could that great heart in its fragile baby body turn to dust while his mother and little sisters were suffering hunger?

I considered Rustem the most beloved of my small boy friends, but a little Arab girl in Syria came to take a place beside him in my heart.

During the last year of the War, I was coming from the mountains after a tour of inspection. People were leaving the country in crowds; disease and famine were at their height. Hordes of famished children, with greenish skeleton faces, deep eyes, enormous mouths, were wandering about uttering a monotonous "I am hungry," uttering it with such intense bitterness that I blushed for humanity.

In the clear air of the mountains the smell of lemon and orange blossoms intoxicated the senses. The sky, the air, the trees, with their gorgeous colouring and perfume had taken hold of me. But the sight of naked children among the balmy pines, children with crooked backs, sparse hair, and such changeling faces and resigned eyes, children waiting for death, made me feel the beauty of nature to be a mockery of the senses.

I entered Beirout with heavy head and heart. The

* The cemeteries by the old walls where the poorest are buried in Stamboul.

years of war had schooled us to an intense realization of suffering and I had lost the feeling of having a separate existence, had somehow dropped into this bitter stricken crowd, had somehow identified myself with it.

In the Bourge the carriage stopped abruptly. I supposed the halt to be due to the starved condition of the horses, but when I saw that the reins were being pulled vigorously by the driver I sprang out.

A woman lay before the carriage, and I saw first her swollen purple feet. I then observed a queer grinning face with tightly closed eyelids and round it a brilliant red scarf. On her legs three tiny children squirmed like newborn kittens. One was a year-old baby, the second could not have been more than three, and their faces resembled those of young monkeys. They blinked, staring with sick and running eyes. A little girl of five with a red kerchief around her head and a bit of blue skirt tied around her lean body, bent over the prostrate woman. She was all the time rubbing her hands.

On both sides of the street fat and well-fed shopkeepers looked on calmly. With the hunger cries of the mountain children still ringing in my ears, I hurriedly searched the street for a baker's shop. "Surely," I thought, "she must be dying of hunger," for in the city such a sight was common. Coming back I held the loaves out to the little girl, then perceived that the face of the prostrate woman did not look famished. The child, who under her red kerchief had great black eyes and the wrinkled yellow skin of a hag, looked first at me, then at the loaves, chattering the while in a shrill voice which was unchildish, even unhuman.

The dialect in which she spoke was strange to me. While she talked she continued to rub her mother's temples and wrists, her air serious and knowing. At

length the hurried chatter developed into an explanation.

A man's voice addressed me in French:

"Do not be anxious—the woman is in a fit."

On turning I saw we had been joined by one of the fat shopkeepers. He took the loaves from my hands.

"The woman is epileptic," he explained, "she usually falls as if dead and were it not for her little girl, must actually have been dead long ago. The child takes care of them all. Give me the bread. When she gets over her fit, the little girl will feed her." He turned to a boy. "Ahmed, some water!"

The little girl looked at me and nodded as if in approval of the shopkeeper's words. Her dark eyes met mine with a far and melting softness and sweetness. The soul of this sickly child with her dirty and diseased hands unfolded itself before me in a flash of mystic beauty.

That night sitting on the open porch of the Convent I watched the snowy tops of the mountains rising above the soft green of the palms, while the blue Mediterranean and the sky melted into each other on the lonely horizon.

The starlit sky of Syria, warm and resplendent, seemed to come lower and lower over our heads. Two nuns passed through the corridor with white headdresses and falling black robes. In my throat was a hard and bitter lump.

A girl from Damascus sang in the garden with haunting and passionate insistence, "O Moon, O Moon. . . ." Her long notes sounded infinite, probing the balmy air and the hearts of the listeners in the orange groves. Then I, too, lost touch with the incurable curse of misery which seemed the lot of the living.

"Death will cure it all," I said. Somewhere in me a tight knot unfastened itself with the new thought.

Comfort fell on me. I imagined that sometime, on the other side of this near sky, Rustem and the little girl would be walking hand in hand. At that time their mothers and sisters would no longer be in need of their support.

III. THE WITCH OF KALABA

The Tchoubouk River foams and flows under the green willows. A hill stretches beyond the line of willows, forming a natural stage with, in front, a steep sharp precipice. On one side of this, is a slope covered with green herbs and trees, edges of rock and mysterious holes. Every evening this line of high yellow earth stretches out into the golden light, changing from one luminous colour to another till the night is black. A poplar stands against the hills and an owl sobs nightly among its leaves.

The peasants have told me that between the precipice and the river live the ghosts of the dead and that they screech in the holes of the rocks. This made me watch the hills carefully at night. At times a round bluish light would glisten in the dark. I took it for the light of a star, setting behind the stretch of hills. The moon with its large yellow face fell to the same inky line, sliding behind it. In that queer play of different lights an owl from the rocky holes joined the one in the dark poplar. It was as if human throats full of pain and tears were sending out sounds from closed depths . . . yet the Tchoubouk River flowed on, softly babbling.

Having watched cows and buffaloes grazing on the hill outlined against the blue air, I had noticed that they came to the river by some secret path among the rocks. It became a haunting desire with me to find this cow path and I started for the hill.

Behind it was a farm and one could climb through the gently sloping fields. I rode up through this farm

and fields to the top of the hill. From there I should be able to gaze at a certain cluster of willows and a red house that was dear to me.

The air was calm, perhaps a little depressing. The evening light fell from the hilltops and shadows crept along the valleys. I tried to urge my horse into a gallop, but Doru lifted his ears and began to snort. My orderly used his whip and spurs for the same purpose, but in vain—the beasts planted their forelegs in the earth, pointed their ears, and continued to resist. Whip and spurs at length forced them to the hilltop, but it was with difficulty.

When we reached the summit, the animals were seen to be covered with sweat. The orderly looked pale and drops stood on his forehead. I also had an uneasy feeling. My knees were trembling and my hair was damp with what I considered childish fear.

Suddenly a wind began to whirl the dry stalks of corn about us. This excited the horses into such uncontrollable terror that they rose on their hind legs and turned round, then pawed the ground. After a hard but fruitless struggle to manage his beast, the orderly jumped down and ran to me.

"Get down, Effendim," he said. "There is something here."

The word "something" left his lips in a hiss of fear. His face was greenish and drops of sweat trickled down his kalpack.

The wind blew out my veil and dress. I jumped off my horse and, bridle in hand, walked toward the edge. I could not laugh at my orderly's fear. I gazed across the precipice at the red-roofed house and the cluster of willow-trees, then sought among the nearer rocks for the secret path of the cattle.

"Mehemmed," I said to the soldier, "what do you mean by—'something'?"

He whispered to me: "There is a witch here, Effendim. The Witch of Kalaba lives near this spot. She comes out as soon as it is quite dark, and—and—there is no moon tonight."

"Have you, yourself, seen her, Mehemmed?"

"How could I help seeing her, Effendim? When I go to Headquarters on yonder hill, I can see the witch here. She is holding up a light. Her hair flies loose and she howls like a dog. Please let us go down. I know the path and will lead the horses. We must leave this place before night sets in."

"What will the witch do if she finds us here?"

"She will strangle us, Effendim. Round her neck she wears a long kerchief which is twisted into a cord. This she swings in her hand and she slips it round the neck of whomever she catches and strangles him."

As we walked down we felt oppressed by a sort of anguish, but the moment we reached the river, the horses and also we ourselves, lost our fears. The pallor and cold perspiration left our faces like masks that one takes off and puts away.

The dark that night was so intense as to be almost palpable. The poplar branches melted into the blackness and a blue light appeared at a point where the hills cut the sky. Again I took the light for a star. The glimmering point occasionally changed its place, sending a ray of light into the sombre sky; and at every flash and change a single cry, like a suppressed sob, echoed in the rocky holes and filled the valley. I had a visual sensation as of a white yet fluid ghost passing me and gesticulating in the flash of the blue light. The long, penetrating sob went through me, through darkness and Angora: "O-u-uuk, O-u-uuk!" I tried in vain to sleep and finally, with my fingers,

closed my ears to the creepy sound. When at last I slept, I dreamed of an infinitely tall white fluid woman, who was waving a blue light with one hand and sending flashes into the depths of the dark void and, with the other, shaking a twisted red kerchief.

I woke in the morning feeling as if I had been beaten.

Ak-Kiz-Ana pushed open my door, voghurt bowl in her hand.

"Art thou still asleep?"

"Come in, Ak-Kiz-Ana, and sit down. I hear that Kalaba has a new witch. Why hast thou not told me about it? Is she one of the dead in the river?"

She shook her head, and a little self-conscious played with the knot in her head kerchief, tying it under her chin. With her small wrinkled face, pointed chin, green eyes and white locks curling out from under her headdress, she made me think of the witches in Macbeth.

"Art thou playing the witch on the hill, eh?"

She spat three times to protect herself from the evil ones.

"The new witch is the wife of Hassan, the gardener of Mahmoud Aga. The government also knows of the witch."

She sat by my bed and told me the story:

Hassan, the gardener of Mahmoud Aga, had lived with his wife in a tiny hut between the witch hill and the farm. Hassan was from Kalaba, but his wife was a Bosnian immigrant. She was tall and strong-shouldered with a moonlike round white face and red cheeks. Her name was Shehimé.

Some time previously, Hassan had begun to have doubts of Shehimé's conduct. Although she frowned

at the labourers on the farm, no sooner was Hassan gone to his work than she also went out. No one knew where she went, but that she disappeared was reported to Hassan by the snubbed labourers. In the hut near the spot where the horse had reared in terror and my orderly had turned pale, the pair had quarrelled fiercely, night after night, and if Hassan's strength had been sufficient there would have been effective wife-beating. At last Hassan caught sight of a strange silver ring on her finger. That was enough. He divorced her there and then.

For three weeks Shehimé was not seen about and Hassan had time to recover his temper. He went to Kalaba to look for a new wife; but it happens that the villagers consider the presence of a stranger will bring misfortune on them. As a consequence newcomers do not have any too good a welcome and are apt to overdo their pleasantness in their desire to gain the goodwill of their neighbours. At any rate Hassan could not persuade a woman to return with him.

At the end of three weeks Hassan had a cloudy face and was often cross. Going to Ak-Kiz-Ana, who lived by the river he told her a tale of woe. . . .

Shehimé was waylaying him in the fields. She was trying to win back his love. She cried to him: "I cannot bear this any longer, Hassan. Kill me if thou wilt, but take me back."

She gave him a box of cigarettes. Hassan who at first had treated her with indifference and disdain, felt differently when he touched the pretty box and by the time he had smoked the first cigarette, his love was once more living and aflame.

Though Shehimé did not repeat her visit, Hassan was now dying of love for her. He was beating his head in anguish. Ak-Kiz-Ana understood that the box

of cigarettes was bewitched and told him so but it was of no use. His love for Shehimé was incurable. The villagers were brought to agree that Hassan should remarry Shehimé and bring her back from Angora.

The morning of the wedding the pair did not come out of their hut. Mahmoud Aga's wife, taking this as evidence of excess of love, waited three days, but at length misgivings led her to the door. It was locked and there was a significant smell.

Before she ventured to have the door broken open Mahmoud Aga's wife called the women of the village together.

Inside Shehimé lay strangled in her white Bosnian costume with red embroidery on the bodice and the sleeves. Her pink head kerchief had been twisted into a cord and used to strangle her. She was swollen and purple to a sickening degree and the gold coins around her neck and the ring on her finger were sunk in her putrescent flesh.

The women scattered, running to Angora to inform the police.

Was it Hassan who killed Shehimé, or her lover who had killed both in a jealous rage? They searched the dung heap for Hassan's corpse, but searched in vain. What more natural than that Shehimé should turn into a ghost?

In the dark nights she wanders on the witch hill in her red-embroidered, white costume. In one hand she waves the bloody kerchief which strangled her, with the other she flashes a bluish light to the village, demanding the price of her blood.

The child shepherds keep away from the hill, for the new witch has so luring a call and so grievous a wail that the old river ghosts have left in search of quieter haunts.

SCANDAL

By Willa Cather

KITTY AYRSHIRE had a cold, a persistent inflammation of the vocal cords which defied the throat specialist. Week after week her name was posted at the Opera, and week after week it was canceled, and the name of one of her rivals was substituted. For nearly two months she had been deprived of everything she liked, even of the people she liked, and had been shut up until she had come to hate the glass windows between her and the world, and the wintry stretch of the Park they looked out upon. She was losing a great deal of money, and, what was worse, she was losing life; days of which she wanted to make the utmost were slipping by, and nights which were to have crowned the days, nights of incalculable possibilities, were being stolen from her by women for whom she had no great affection. At first she had been courageous, but the strain of prolonged uncertainty was telling on her, and her nervous condition did not improve her larynx. Every morning Miles Creedon looked down her throat, only to put her off with evasions, to pronounce improvement that apparently never got her anywhere, to say that tomorrow he might be able to promise something definite.

Her illness, of course, gave rise to rumours—rumours that she had lost her voice, that at some time last summer she must have lost her discretion. Kitty herself was frightened by the way in which this cold hung on. She had had many sharp illnesses in her life, but aways, before this, she had rallied quickly. Was she beginning to lose her resiliency? Was she, by any cursed chance, facing a bleak time when she would have to cherish herself? She protested, as she wandered

about her sunny, many-windowed rooms on the tenth floor, that if she was going to have to live frugally, she wouldn't live at all. She wouldn't live on any terms but the very generous ones she had always known. She wasn't going to hoard her vitality. It must be there when she wanted it, be ready for any strain she chose to put upon it, let her play fast and loose with it; and then, if necessary, she would be ill for a while and pay the piper. But be systematically prudent and parsimonious she would not.

When she attempted to deliver all this to Doctor Creedon, he merely put his finger on her lips and said they would discuss these things when she could talk without injuring her throat. He allowed her to see no one except the Director of the Opera, who did not shine in conversation and was not apt to set Kitty going. The Director was a glum fellow, indeed, but during this calamitous time he had tried to be soothing, and he agreed with Creedon that she must not risk a premature appearance. Kitty was tormented by a suspicion that he was secretly backing the little Spanish woman who had sung many of her parts since she had been ill. He furthered the girl's interests because his wife had a very special consideration for her, and Madame had that consideration because— But that was too long and too dreary a story to follow out in one's mind. Kitty felt a tonsilitis disgust for opera-house politics, which, when she was in health, she rather enjoyed, being no mean strategist herself. The worst of being ill was that it made so many things and people look base.

She was always afraid of being disillusioned. She wished to believe that everything for sale in Vanity Fair was worth the advertised price. When she ceased to believe in these delights, she told herself, her pulling power would decline and she would go to pieces. In

some way the chill of her disillusionment would quiver through the long, black line which reached from the box-office down to Seventh Avenue on nights when she sang. They shivered there in the rain and cold, all those people, because they loved to believe in her inextinguishable zest. She was no prouder of what she drew in the boxes than she was of that long, oscillating tail; little fellows in thin coats. Italians, Frenchmen, South-Americans, Japanese.

When she had been cloistered like a Trappist for six weeks, with nothing from the outside world but notes and flowers and disquieting morning papers, Kitty told Miles Creedon that she could not endure complete isolation any longer.

"I simply cannot live through the evenings. They have become horrors to me. Every night is the last night of a condemned man. I do nothing but cry, and that makes my throat worse."

Miles Creedon, handsomest of his profession, was better looking with some invalids than with others. His athletic figure, his red cheeks, and splendid teeth always had a cheering effect upon this particular patient, who hated anything weak or broken.

"What can I do, my dear? What do you wish? Shall I come and hold your lovely hand from eight to ten? You have only to suggest it."

"Would you do that, even? No, *caro mio,* I take far too much of your time as it is. For an age now you have been the only man in the world to me, and you have been charming! But the world is big, and I am missing it. Let some one come tonight, some one interesting, but not too interesting. Pierce Tevis, for instance. He is just back from Paris. Tell the nurse I may see him for an hour tonight," Kitty finished pleadingly, and put her fingers on the doctor's

sleeve. He looked down at them and smiled whimsically.

Like other people, he was weak to Kitty Ayrshire. He would do for her things that he would do for no one else; would break any engagement, desert a dinner-table, leaving an empty place and an offended hostess, to sit all evening in Kitty's dressing-room, spraying her throat and calming her nerves, using every expedient to get her through a performance. He had studied her voice like a singing master; knew all of its idiosyncrasies and the emotional and nervous perturbations which affected it. When it was permissible, sometimes when it was not permissible, he indulged her caprices. On this sunny morning her wan, disconsolate face moved him.

"Yes, you may see Tevis this evening if you will assure me that you will not shed one tear for twenty-four hours. I may depend on your word?" He rose, and stood before the deep couch on which his patient reclined. Her arch look seemed to say, "On what could you depend more?" Creedon smiled, and shook his head. "If I find you worse tomorrow—"

He crossed to the writing-table and began to separate a bunch of tiny flame-coloured rosebuds. "May I?" Selecting one, he sat down on the chair from which he had lately risen, and leaned forward while Kitty pinched the thorns from the stem and arranged the flower in his buttonhole.

"Thank you. I like to wear one of yours. Now I must be off to the hospital. I've a nasty little operation to do this morning. I'm glad it's not you. Shall I telephone Tevis about this evening?"

Kitty hesitated. Her eyes ran rapidly about, seeking a likely pretext. Creedon laughed.

"Oh, I see. You've already asked him to come. You were so sure of me! Two hours in bed after

lunch, with all the windows open, remember. Read something diverting, but not exciting; some homely British author; nothing *abandonné*. And don't make faces at me. Until tomorrow!"

When her charming doctor had disappeared through the doorway, Kitty fell back on her cushions and closed her eyes. Her mocking-bird, excited by the sunlight, was singing in his big gilt cage, and a white lilac-tree that had come that morning was giving out its faint sweetness in the warm room. But Kitty looked paler and wearier than when the doctor was with her. Even with him she rose to her part just a little; couldn't help it. And he took his share of her vivacity and sparkle, like every one else. He believed that his presence was soothing to her. But he admired; and whoever admired, blew on the flame, however lightly.

The mocking-bird was in great form this morning. He had the best bird-voice she had ever heard, and Kitty wished there were some way to note down his improvisations; but his intervals were not expressible in any scale she knew. Parker White had brought him to her, from Ojo Caliente, in New Mexico, where he had been trained in the pine forests by an old Mexican and an ill-tempered, lame master-bird, half thrush, that taught young birds to sing. This morning, in his song there were flashes of silvery Southern springtime; they opened inviting roads of memory. In half an hour he had sung his disconsolate mistress to sleep.

That evening Kitty sat curled up on the deep couch before the fire, awaiting Pierce Tevis. Her costume was folds upon folds of diaphanous white over equally diaphanous rose, with a line of white fur about her neck. Her beautiful arms were bare. Her tiny Chinese slippers were embroidered so richly that they resembled the painted porcelain of old vases. She looked like a

sultan's youngest, newest bride; a beautiful little toy-woman, sitting at one end of the long room which composed about her,—which, in the soft light, seemed happily arranged for her. There were flowers everywhere: rose-trees; camellia-bushes, red and white; the first forced hyacinths of the season; a feathery mimosa-tree, tall enough to stand under.

The long front of Kitty's study was all windows. At one end was the fireplace, before which she sat. At the other end, back in a lighted alcove, hung a big, warm, sympathetic interior by Lucien Simon,—a group of Kitty's friends having tea in the painter's salon in Paris. The room in the picture was flooded with early lamp-light, and one could feel the grey, chill winter twilight in the Paris streets outside. There stood the cavalier-like old composer, who had done much for Kitty, in his most characteristic attitude, before the hearth. Mme. Simon sat at the tea-table. B——, the historian, and H——, the philologist, stood in animated discussion behind the piano, while Mme. H—— was tying on the bonnet of her lovely little daughter. Marcel Durand, the physicist, sat alone in a corner, his startling black-and-white profile lowered broodingly, his cold hands locked over his sharp knee. A genial, red-bearded sculptor stood over him, about to touch him on the shoulder and waken him from his dream.

This painting made, as it were, another room; so that Kitty's study on Central Park West seemed to open into that charming French interior, into one of the most highly harmonized and richly associated rooms in Paris. There her friends sat or stood about, men distinguished, women at once plain and beautiful, with their furs and bonnets, their clothes that were so distinctly not smart—all held together by the warm lamp-light, by an indescribable atmosphere of graceful and gracious human living.

Pierce Tevis, after he had entered noiselessly and greeted Kitty, stood before her fire and looked over her shoulder at this picture.

"It's nice that you have them there together, now that they are scattered, God knows where, fighting to preserve just that. But your own room, too, is charming," he added at last, taking his eyes from the canvas.

Kitty shrugged her shoulders.

"Bah! I can help to feed the lamp, but I can't supply the dear things it shines upon."

"Well, tonight, it shines upon you and me, and we aren't so bad." Tevis stepped forward and took her hand affectionately. "You've been over a rough bit of road. I'm so sorry. It's left you looking very lovely, though. Has it been very hard to get on?"

She brushed his hand gratefully against her cheek and nodded.

"Awfully dismal. Everything has been shut out from me but—gossip. That always gets in. Often I don't mind, but this time I have. People do tell such lies about me."

"Of course we do. That's part of our fun, one of the many pleasures you give us. It only shows how hard up we are for interesting public personages; for a royal family, for romantic fiction, if you will. But I never hear any stories that wound me, and I'm very sensitive about you."

"I'm gossiped about rather more than the others, am I not?"

"I believe! Heaven send that the day when you are not gossiped about is far distant! Do you want to bite off your nose to spite your pretty face? You are the sort of person who makes myths. You can't turn around without making one. That's your singular good luck. A whole staff of publicity men, working day and night, couldn't do for you what you do for

yourself. There is an affinity between you and the popular imagination."

"I suppose so," said Kitty, and sighed. "All the same, I'm getting almost as tired of the person I'm supposed to be as of the person I really am. I wish you would invent a new Kitty Ayrshire for me, Pierce. Can't I do something revolutionary? Marry, for instance?"

Tevis rose in alarm.

"Whatever you do, don't try to change your legend. You have now the one that gives the greatest satisfaction to the greatest number of people. Don't disappoint your public. The popular imagination, to which you make such a direct appeal, for some reason wished you to have a son, so it has given you one. I've heard a dozen versions of the story, but it is always a son, never by any chance a daughter. Your public gives you what is best for you. Let well enough alone."

Kitty yawned and dropped back on her cushions.

"He still persists, does he, in spite of never being visible?"

"Oh, but he has been seen by ever so many people. Let me think a moment." He sank into an attitude of meditative ease. "The best description I ever had of him was from a friend of my mother, an elderly woman, thoroughly truthful and matter-of-fact. She has seen him often. He is kept in Russia, in St. Petersburg, that was. He is about eight years old and of marvellous beauty. He is always that in every version. My old friend has seen him being driven in his sledge on the Nevskii Prospekt on winter afternoons; black horses with silver bells and a giant in uniform on the seat beside the driver. He is always attended by this giant, who is responsible to the Grand Duke Paul for the boy. This lady can produce no evidence beyond his beauty and his splendid furs and

the fact that all the Americans in Petrograd know he is your son."

Kitty laughed mournfully.

"If the Grand Duke Paul had a son, any old rag of a son, the province of Moscow couldn't contain him! He may, for aught I know, actually pretend to have a son. It would be very like him." She looked at her finger-tips and her rings disapprovingly for a moment. "Do you know, I've been thinking that I would rather like to lay hands on that youngster. I believe he'd be interesting. I'm bored with the world."

Tevis looked up and said quickly:

"Would you like him, really?"

"Of course I should," she said indignantly. "But, then, I like other things, too; and one has to choose. When one has only two or three things to choose from, life is hard; when one has many, it is harder still. No, on the whole, I don't mind that story. It's rather pretty, except for the Grand Duke. But not all of them are pretty."

"Well, none of them are very ugly; at least I never heard but one that troubled me, and that was long ago."

She looked interested.

"That is what I want to know; how do the ugly ones get started? How did that one get going and what was it about? Is it too dreadful to repeat?"

"No, it's not especially dreadful; merely rather shabby. If you really wish to know, and won't be vexed, I can tell you exactly how it got going, for I took the trouble to find out. But it's a long story, and you really had nothing whatever to do with it."

"Then who did have to do with it? Tell me; I should like to know exactly how even one of them originated."

"Will you be comfortable and quiet and not get

into a rage, and let me look at you as much as I please?"

Kitty nodded, and Tevis sat watching her indolently while he debated how much of his story he ought not to tell her. Kitty liked being looked at by intelligent persons. She knew exactly how good looking she was; and she knew, too, that, pretty as she was, some of those rather sallow women in the Simon painting had a kind of beauty which she would never have. This knowledge, Tevis was thinking, this important realization, contributed more to her loveliness than any other thing about her; more than her smooth, ivory skin or her changing grey eyes, the delicate forehead above them, or even the dazzling smile, which was gradually becoming too bright and too intentional,—out in the world, at least. Here by her own fire she still had for her friends a smile less electric than the one she flashed from stages. She could still be, in short, *intime,* a quality which few artists keep, which few ever had.

Kitty broke in on her friend's meditations.

"You may smoke. I had rather you did. I hate to deprive people of things they like."

"No, thanks. May I have those chocolates on the tea-table? They are quite as bad for me. May you? No, I suppose not." He settled himself by the fire, with the candy beside him, and began in the agreeable voice which always soothed his listener.

"As I said, it was a long while ago, when you first came back to this country and were singing at the Manhattan. I dropped in at the Metropolitan one evening to hear something new they were trying out. It was an off night, no pullers in the cast, and nobody in the boxes but governesses and poor relations. At the end of the first act two people entered one of the boxes in the second tier. The man was Siegmund Stein, the department-store millionaire, and the girl,

so the men about me in the omnibus box began to whisper, was Kitty Ayrshire. I didn't know you then, but I was unwilling to believe that you were with Stein. I could not contradict them at that time, however, for the resemblance, if it was merely a resemblance, was absolute, and all the world knew that you were not singing at the Manhattan that night. The girl's hair was dressed just as you then wore yours. Moreover, her head was small and restless like yours, and she had your colouring, your eyes, your chin. She carried herself with the critical indifference one might expect in an artist who had come for a look at a new production that was clearly doomed to failure. She applauded lightly. She made comments to Stein when comments were natural enough. I thought, as I studied her face with the glass, that her nose was a trifle thinner than yours, a prettier nose, my dear Kitty, but stupider and more inflexible. All the same, I was troubled until I saw her laugh,—and then I knew she was a counterfeit. I had never seen you laugh, but I knew that you would not laugh like that. It was not boisterous; indeed, it was consciously refined,—mirthless, meaningless. In short, it was not the laugh of one whom our friends in there"—pointing to the Simon painting—"would honour with their affection and admiration."

Kitty rose on her elbow and burst out indignantly:

"So you would really have been hood-winked except for that! You may be sure that no woman, no intelligent woman, would have been. Why do we ever take the trouble to look like anything for any of you? I could count on my four fingers"—she held them up and shook them at him—"the men I've known who had the least perception of what any woman really looked like, and they were all dressmakers. Even painters"—glancing back in the direction of the Simon picture—

"never get more than one type through their thick heads; they try to make all women look like some wife or mistress. You are all the same; you never see our real faces. What you do see, is some cheap conception of prettiness you got from a coloured supplement when you were adolescents. It's too discouraging. I'd rather take vows and veil my face for ever from such abominable eyes. In the kingdom of the blind any petticoat is a queen." Kitty thumped the cushion with her elbow. "Well, I can't do anything about it. Go on with your story."

"Aren't you furious, Kitty! And I thought I was so shrewd. I've quite forgotten where I was. Anyhow, I was not the only man fooled. After the last curtain I met Villard, the press man of that management, in the lobby, and asked him whether Kitty Ayrshire was in the house. He said he thought so. Stein had telephoned for a box, and said he was bringing one of the artists from the other company. Villard had been too busy about the new production to go to the box, but he was quite sure the woman was Ayrshire, whom he had met in Paris.

"Not long after that I met Dan Leland, a classmate of mine, at the Harvard Club. He's a journalist, and he used to keep such eccentric hours that I had not run across him for a long time. We got to talking about modern French music, and discovered that we both had a very lively interest in Kitty Ayrshire.

" 'Could you tell me,' Dan asked abruptly, 'why, with pretty much all the known world to choose her friends from, this young woman should flit about with Siegmund Stein? It prejudices people against her. He's a most objectionable person.'

" 'Have you,' I asked, 'seen her with him, yourself?'

"Yes, he had seen her driving with Stein, and some of the men on his paper had seen her dining with him

at rather queer places down town. Stein was always hanging about the Manhattan on nights when Kitty sang. I told Dan that I suspected a masquerade. That interested him, and he said he thought he would look into the matter. In short, we both agreed to look into it. Finally, we got the story, though Dan could never use it, could never even hint at it, because Stein carries heavy advertising in his paper.

"To make you see the piont, I must give you a little history of Siegmund Stein. Any one who has seen him never forgets him. He is one of the most hideous men in New York, but it's not at all the common sort of ugliness that comes from overeating and automobiles. He isn't one of the fat horrors. He has one of those rigid horselike faces that never tell anything; a long nose, flattened as if it had been tied down; a scornful chin; long, white teeth; flat cheeks, yellow as a Mongolian's; tiny, black eyes, with puffy lids and no lashes; dingy, dead-looking hair—looks as if it were glued on.

"Stein came here a beggar from somewhere in Austria. He began by working on the machines in old Rosenthal's garment factory. He became a speeder, a foreman, a salesman; worked his way ahead steadily until the hour when he rented an old dwelling-house on Seventh Avenue and began to make misses' and juniors' coats. I believe he was the first manufacturer to specialize in those particular articles. Dozens of garment manufacturers have come along the same road, but Stein is like none of the rest of them. He is, and always was, a personality. While he was still at the machine, a hideous, underfed little whipper-snapper, he was already a youth of many-coloured ambitions, deeply concerned about his dress, his associates, his recreations. He haunted the old Astor Library and the Metropolitan Museum, learned something about pictures and poreclains, took singing lessons, though he

had a voice like a crow's. When he sat down to his baked apple and doughnut in a basement lunch-room, he would prop a book up before him and address his food with as much leisure and ceremony as if he were dining at his club. He held himself at a distance from his fellow-workmen and somehow always managed to impress them with his superiority. He had inordinate vanity, and there are many stories about his foppishness. After his first promotion in Rosenthal's factory, he bought a new overcoat. A few days later, one of the men at the machines, which Stein had just quitted, appeared in a coat exactly like it. Stein could not discharge him, but he gave his own coat to a newly arrived Russian boy and got another. He was already magnificent.

"After he began to make headway with misses' and juniors' cloaks, he became a collector—etchings, china, old musical instruments. He had a dancing master, and engaged a beautiful Brazilian widow—she was said to be a secret agent for some South American republic—to teach him Spanish. He cultivated the society of the unknown great, poets, actors, musicians. He entertained them sumptuously, and they regarded him as a deep, mysterious Jew who had the secret of gold, which they had not. His business associates thought him a man of taste and culture, a patron of the arts, a credit to the garment trade.

"One of Stein's many ambitions was to be thought a success with women. He got considerable notoriety in the garment world by his attention to an emotional actress who is now quite forgotten, but who had her little hour of expectation. Then there was a dancer; then, just after Gorky's visit here, a Russian anarchist woman. After that the coat-makers and shirtwaist-makers began to whisper that Stein's great success was with Kitty Ayrshire.

"It is the hardest thing in the world to disprove such a story, as Dan Leland and I discovered. We managed to worry down the girl's address through a taxi-cab driver who got next to Stein's chauffeur. She had an apartment in a decent-enough house on Waverly Place. Nobody ever came to see her but Stein, her sisters, and a little Italian girl from whom we got the story.

"The counterfeit's name was Ruby Mohr. She worked in a shirtwaist factory, and this Italian girl, Margarita, was her chum. Stein came to the factory when he was hunting for living models for his new department store. He looked the girls over, and picked Ruby out from several hundred. He had her call at his office after business hours, tried her out in cloaks and evening gowns, and offered her a position. She never, however, appeared as a model in the Sixth Avenue store. Her likeness to the newly arrived prima donna suggested to Stein another act in the play he was always putting on. He gave two of her sisters positions as saleswomen, but Ruby he established in an apartment on Waverly Place.

"To the outside world Stein became more mysterious in his behaviour than ever. He dropped his Bohemian friends. No more suppers and theatre-parties. Whenever Kitty sang, he was in his box at the Manhattan, usually alone, but not always. Sometimes he took two or three good customers, large buyers from St. Louis or Kansas City. His coat factory is still the biggest earner of his properties. I've seen him there with these buyers, and they carried themselves as if they were being let in on something; took possession of the box with a proprietary air, smiled and applauded and looked wise as if each and every one of them were friends of Kitty Ayrshire. While they buzzed and trained their field-glasses on the prima donna, Stein was impassive and silent. I don't imagine he even told many lies. He

is the most insinuating cuss, anyhow. He probably dropped his voice or lifted his eyebrows when he invited them, and let their own eager imaginations do the rest. But what tales they took back to their provincial capitals!

"Sometimes, before they left New York, they were lucky enough to see Kitty dining with their clever garment man at some restaurant, her back to the curious crowd, her face half concealed by a veil or a fur collar. Those people are like children; nothing that is true or probable interests them. They want the old, gaudy lies, told always in the same way. Siegmund Stein and Kitty Ayrshire—a story like that, once launched, is repeated unchallenged for years among New York factory sports. In St. Paul, St. Jo, Sioux City, Council Bluffs, there used to be clothing stores where a photograph of Kitty Ayrshire hung in the fitting-room or over the proprietor's desk.

"This girl impersonated you successfully to the lower manufacturing world of New York for two seasons. I doubt if it could have been put across anywhere else in the world except in this city, which pays you so magnificently and believes of you what it likes. Then you went over to the Metropolitan, stopped living in hotels, took this apartment, and began to know people. Stein discontinued his pantomime at the right moment, withdrew his patronage. Ruby, of course, did not go back to shirtwaists. A business friend of Stein's took her over, and she dropped out of sight. Last winter, one cold, snowy night, I saw her once again. She was going into a saloon hotel with a tough-looking young fellow. She had been drinking, she was shabby, and her blue shoes left stains in the slush. But she still looked amazingly, convincingly like a battered, hardened Kitty Ayrshire. As I saw her going up the brass-edged stairs, I said to myself—"

"Never mind that." Kitty rose quickly, took an impatient step to the hearth, and thrust one shining porcelain slipper out to the fire. "The girl doesn't interest me. There is nothing I can do about her, and of course she never looked like me at all. But what did Stein do without me?"

"Stein? Oh, he chose a new rôle. He married with great magnificence—married a Miss Mandelbaum, a California heiress. Her people have a line of department stores along the Pacific Coast. The Steins now inhabit a great house on Fifth Avenue that used to belong to people of a very different sort. To old New-Yorkers, it's an historic house."

Kitty laughed and sat down on the end of her couch nearest her guest; sat upright, without cushions.

"I imagine I know more about that house than you do. Let me tell you how I made the sequel to your story.

"It has to do with Peppo Amoretti. You may remember that I brought Peppo to this country, and brought him in, too, the year the war broke out, when it wasn't easy to get boys who hadn't done military service out of Italy. I had taken him to Munich to have some singing lessons. After the war came on we had to get from Munich to Naples in order to sail at all. We were told that we could take only hand luggage on the railways, but I took nine trunks and Peppo. I dressed Peppo in knickerbockers, made him brush his curls down over his ears like doughnuts, and carry a little violin-case. It took us eleven days to reach Naples. I got my trunks through purely by personal persuasion. Once at Naples, I had a frightful time getting Peppo on the boat. I declared him as hand-luggage; he was so travel-worn and so crushed by his absurd appearance that he did not look like much else. One inspector had a sense of humour, and passed him at that, but the other

was inflexible. I had to be very dramatic. Peppo was frightened, and there is no fight in him, anyhow.

"'*Per me tutto e indifferente, Signorina,*' he kept whimpering. 'Why should I go without it? I have lost it.'

"'Which?' I screamed. '*Not* the hat-trunk?'

"'*No, no; mia voce.* It is gone since Ravenna.'

"He thought he had lost his voice somewhere along the way. At last I told the inspector that I couldn't live without Peppo, and that I would throw myself into the bay. I took him into my confidence. Of course, when I found I had to play on that string, I wished I hadn't made the boy such a spectacle. But ridiculous as he was, I managed to make the inspector believe that I had kidnapped him, and that he was indispensable to my happiness. I found that incorruptible official, like most people, willing to aid one so utterly depraved. I could never have got that boy out for any proper, reasonable purpose, such as giving him a job or sending him to school. Well, it's a queer world! But I must cut all that and get to the Steins.

"That first winter Peppo had no chance at the Opera. There was an iron ring about him, and my interest in him only made it all the more difficult. We've become a nest of intrigues down there; worse than the Scala. Peppo had to scratch along just any way. One evening he came to me and said he could get an engagement to sing for the grand rich Steins, but the condition was that I should sing with him. They would pay, oh, anything! And the fact that I had sung a private engagement with him would give him other engagements of the same sort. As you know, I never sing private engagements; but to help the boy along, I consented.

"On the night of the party, Peppo and I went to the house together in a taxi. My car was ailing. At the

hour when the music was about to begin, the host and hostess appeared at my dressing-room, upstairs. Isn't he wonderful? Your description was most inadequate. I never encountered such restrained, frozen, sculptured vanity. My hostess struck me as extremely good natured and jolly, though somewhat intimate in her manner. Her reassuring pats and smiles puzzled me at the time, I remember, when I didn't know that she had anything in particular to be large-minded and charitable about. Her husband made known his willingness to conduct me to the music-room, and we ceremoniously descended a staircase blooming like the hanging-gardens of Babylon. From there I had my first glimpse of the company. They *were* strange people. The women glittered like Christmas-trees. When we were halfway down the stairs, the buzz of conversation stopped so suddenly that some foolish remark I happened to be making rang out like oratory. Every face was lifted toward us. My host and I completed our descent and went the length of the drawing-room through a silence which somewhat awed me. I couldn't help wishing that one could ever get that kind of attention in a concert-hall. In the music-room Stein insisted upon arranging things for me. I must say that he was neither awkward nor stupid, not so wooden as most rich men who rent singers. I was properly affable. One has, under such circumstances, to be either gracious or pouty. Either you have to stand and sulk, like an old-fashioned German singer who wants the piano moved about for her like a tea-wagon, and the lights turned up and the lights turned down,—or you have to be a trifle forced, like a débutante trying to make good. The fixed attention of my audience affected me. I was aware of unusual interest, of a thoroughly enlisted public. When, however, my host at last left me, I felt the tension relax to such an extent that I wondered

whether by any chance he, and not I, was the object of so much curiosity. But, at any rate, their cordiality pleased me so well that after Peppo and I had finished our numbers I sang an encore or two, and I stayed through Peppo's performance because I felt that they liked to look at me.

"I had asked not to be presented to people, but Mrs. Stein, of course, brought up a few friends. The throng began closing in upon me, glowing faces bore down from every direction, and I realized that, among people of such unscrupulous cordiality, I must look out for myself. I ran through the drawing-room and fled up the stairway, which was thronged with Old Testament characters. As I passed them, they all looked at me with delighted, cherishing eyes, as if I had at last come back to my native hamlet. At the top of the stairway a young man, who looked like a camel with its hair parted on the side, stopped me, seized my hands and said he must present himself, as he was such an old friend of Siegmund's bachelor days. I said, 'Yes, how interesting!' The atmosphere was somehow so thick and personal that I felt uncomfortable.

"When I reached my dressing-room Mrs. Stein followed me to say that I would, of course, come down to supper, as a special table had been prepared for me. I replied that it was not my custom.

" 'But here it is different. With us you must feel perfect freedom. Siegmund will never forgive me if you do not stay. After supper our car will take you home.' She was overpowering. She had the manner of an intimate and indulgent friend of long standing. She seemed to have come to make me a visit. I could only get rid of her by telling her that I must see Peppo at once, if she would be good enough to send him to me. She did not come back, and I began to fear that I would actually be dragged down to supper. It was as

if I had been kidnapped. I felt like *Gulliver* among the giants. These people were all too—well, too much what they were. No chill of manner could hold them off. I was defenceless. I must get away. I ran to the top of the staircase and looked down. There was that fool Peppo, beleaguered by a bevy of fair women. They were simply looting him, and he was grinning like an idiot. I gathered up my train, ran down, and made a dash at him, yanked him out of that circle of rich contours, and dragged him by a limp cuff up the stairs after me. I told him that I must escape from that house at once. If he could get to the telephone, well and good; but if he couldn't get past so many deep-breathing ladies, then he must break out of the front door and hunt me a cab on foot. I felt as if I were about to be immured within a harem.

"He had scarcely dashed off when the host called my name several times outside the door. Then he knocked and walked in, uninvited. I told him that I would be inflexible about supper. He must make my excuses to his charming friends; any pretext he chose. He did not insist. He took up his stand by the fireplace and began to talk; said rather intelligent things. I did not drive him out; it was his own house, and he made himself agreeable. After a time a deputation of his friends came down the hall, somewhat boisterously, to say that supper could not be served until we came down. Stein was still standing by the mantel, I remember. He scattered them, without moving or speaking to them, by a portentous look. There is something hideously forceful about him. He took a very profound leave of me, and said he would order his car at once. In a moment Peppo arrived, splashed to the ankles, and we made our escape together.

"A week later Peppo came to me in a rage, with a paper called *The American Gentleman,* and showed

me a page devoted to three photographs: Mr. and Mrs. Siegmund Stein, lately married in New York City, and Kitty Ayrshire, operatic soprano, who sang at their house-warming. Mrs. Stein and I were grinning our best, looked frantic with delight, and Siegmund frowned inscrutably between us. Poor Peppo wasn't mentioned. Stein has a publicity sense."

Tevis rose.

"And you have enormous publicity value and no discretion. It was just like you to fall for such a plot, Kitty. You'd be sure to."

"What's the use of discretion?" She murmured behind her hand. "If the Steins want to adopt you into their family circle, they'll get you in the end. That's why I don't feel compassionate about your Ruby. She and I are in the same boat. We are both the victims of circumstance, and in New York so many of the circumstances are Steins."

A DISGUISED PROVIDENCE

By Edward S. Martin

YOU will be interested to know, sir, that I am engaged."

"Engaged to be married?"

"That was the understanding."

"Why, Henry!"

"Why not, father?"

"You haven't got my consent, for one thing, and—my boy, what are you getting engaged on?"

"I supposed it would strike you as rather speculative."

"Rather."

"But, after all, I am twenty-seven years old."

"Oh no, Henry; twenty-seven years young. Twen-

ty-seven years impecunious; twenty-seven years rash and improvident!"

"And I am a practising lawyer, with my name on an office door, a fourth interest in a stenographer, and some clients."

"Clients! *Quorum pars maxima fui.*"

"And an allowance made me by my father, who is a generous man, though not rich."

"An old, precarious man who works for his living, and has a wife to provide for. A reed shaken regularly by the wind every spring, and driven to Lakewood and sometimes to Florida. A poor, propped-up ruin, liable to fall in any day, and not over-well insured. A doting parent, of course, and yet one whose allowances may not safely be regarded as perpetual annuities. Allowances should be made for the young, Henry. Allowances must often be made for engaged persons; but, Lord! Henry, what are you going to marry on?"

"Now, father, don't take it so hard. I'll bet I could scrape along if you turned me loose. I took in nearly a hundred dollars last month, and it is less than two years since I began practice. Besides, I only said I was engaged; I'm not married yet. You'll see it in the papers when I am married, so be easy. It is not such a terrible expense to be engaged, though, if you have a mind to make some temporary enlargement of my resources, I can use the money."

"I have no doubt, if you really are engaged, that you've run in debt somewhere for a ring."

"Not yet, but I'm going to. I haven't got your consent yet."

"Have you told your mother?"

"I thought I would first give you an opportunity to consent of your own free will. Besides, mother is an observant person, and goes out a good deal between

breakfast and dinner, and reads the papers, and it is hard to surprise her with news."

"By thunder! Henry, I believe you really are engaged."

"Aren't you ever going to ask me who is the girl?"

"Of course, if it is so, it's some nice girl. I hadn't got to the girl. A mind stunned by a general proposition must clear before it can grasp details. Twenty-seven years young, belongs to one or two clubs, has a fair collection of outstanding bills, has an allowance from an impaired father, earned nearly a hundred dollars last month, and is engaged to be married, and expects to owe for a ring! Well, Henry, who *is* the fortunate lady?"

"Jane Templeton is the lady, sir."

"Jane Templeton! Jane Templeton! I seem to know the name. I've seen Jane Templeton somewhere, haven't I?"

"Don't you remember a dinner we had here last month?"

"Yes; that's it. A juvenile dinner, that you got up, and you let your mother and me come to the table, and your mother thought it was so considerate of you. Now Jane was there, wasn't she? And she sat— Where did she sit, Henry?"

"Why father, she sat on your right!"

"Lord bless me! so she did; so she did! And that's the girl. Dark hair and light-blue eyes. Extraordinarily nice eyes. I don't notice the color of eyes once a year. Why, that's a dear girl, Henry. Let's see! She was going to the opera, and she talked about Corots, and scarabæi, and old tapestries, and yachts, and Newport, and dahabeeyahs, and hospitals, and slum settlements, and expensive subjects of that sort; and she had on— What did she have on? Somehow I only remember how lovely she looked, and that I

thought so, and that I was thankful I wasn't supporting her. Why, Henry, what bait did you use? Jane Templeton! Who's her father? Has she no mother, no friends? What did you tell him?"

"Her father was James Templeton, of Templeton & Condit. You know the firm. He's dead. He worked too hard. Her mother's dead, too. I blush to say that Jane is an orphan, and an only child, and lives with her aunt."

"James Templeton's only child! You have imposed upon that young woman. She must have a very respectable fortune. Has her aunt no control over her? Has she no guardian?"

"Why, dear father, what ails her? It isn't only that I am going to get *her*. She is going to get *me*. She's doing well. The aunt doesn't greatly mind, and, for that matter, doesn't greatly count, though she is a competent aunt and a good lady. The guardian's responsibility ceased two years ago. There is a trustee; that's all. There probably is a good deal of money, but I can't help it."

"I suppose not. You'll just have to live it down. But I had not at all foreseen such an accident, and you must excuse me if I feel the shock. The gold-brick stratagem is nothing to it. What do you think she sees in you, Henry?"

"My dear dad's likeness, I dare say. She as good as said so the night she dined here."

"A fortune and a sweet gift of speech. Maybe I shall get a daughter out of this—let alone grandchildren. We must make the best of it, but it grieves me to think how much better she might have done!"

"No such thing, father. Of course there has been a squad of willing souls that she might have had, but —oh—some were too fat, and some too rich, and some

too old, and some incapable of domestication, and most of them had impediments of one kind or another, and I really couldn't see where she could do much better. And besides, I told her that if she took me she would get the best father-in-law in town, and the most sympathetic mother-in-law; and that settled it."

"You are a very smooth young man, Henry. You have imposed on that nice girl. But if you are really going to marry into affluence, I am going to take your mother up the Nile next winter. I have put by nearly enough for her and me, and why shouldn't we enjoy life? Perhaps your Jane will give me a cup of tea about five o'clock to-morrow? Yes? I naturally wish to pay my respects to so altruistic a lady. Meet me there? No, thank you! If you will just say I'm coming, that will be all."

"She has nice hands, Henry; good, strong, competent hands."

"I understand that you held one of them."

"I dare say. Her mind seemed fairly composed so far as you were concerned."

"I looked in myself at six, and was glad to find you had not unsettled it. Did you congratulate her?"

"I didn't seem to find words for that, knowing you as I do, but I welcomed her. I had no trouble about that."

"She said you seemed hospitably inclined towards her. Did you ask for a settlement?"

"No; you'll have to send your solicitor if you want a settlement. I don't think she is overwell posted on fiscal concerns, anyway. Nothing that I said about the market seemed to take hold at all. She got so far once as to say, 'Mr. Pelton says so and so.' Who's Mr. Pelton?"

"He's Samuel Pelton, who succeeded his father as

trustee of her father's estate. You've met him, haven't you?"

"I don't remember him. The old man was an upright, conservative old party. Now you speak of it, it seems to me that there was some gossip about the son being caught in the May panic, and rather hard hit. If that's so, I trust he lost his own money. I dare say, Henry, you may get some business out of that estate."

"In time, no doubt. Meanwhile the proposition is for a wedding after Easter, and a few months abroad."

"And leave a teething law practice in charge of a trained nurse, I suppose. By George! Henry, that'll be mighty inconvenient for you, and not over-timely for me. Well, you can sell the bonds your grandfather left you. The wash of these ample fortunes is very upsetting to small craft. We have sat on those poor old bonds, or their predecessors, ever since you were a baby, and over they go in a bread-cast-upon-the-waters investment that smacks a little too much of pleasure to be business and a little too much of business to be perfect pleasure. But then, no pleasure is perfect. It's terribly like false pretences and bunco, but I suppose the end justifies the means."

"If you really think—"

"I don't really think. I'm not going to think, I'm not going to meddle, I'm not even going to croak any more. I threw away your leading-strings five years ago. That nice girl seems to have rather too much money; much more than you are used to; rather more, I judge, than she is used to yet, for she has barely come into it. But life is full of perils, and as between the anxieties of dearth, and the hazards of superabundance, I suppose we all prefer to take our chances with superfluity."

A month later. The same to the same.

"Well, father? Have you read the evening papers?"

"Not the late editions. I saw the six-o'clock edition of something about noon, but it had no news in it. Anything up?"

"A good deal. Most interesting. Sam Pelton's killed!"

"Pelton? So? Our Jane's trustee?"

"Just that."

"Run over by an automobile?"

"No; safe at home in his own apartment at the Pelion, just after noon. They're digging a cellar across the street, and the noon blast sent a five-ton chunk of rock through Pelton's window and caught him as he stood before the window shaving. Poor man! it made a pancake of him."

"Shocking! Why, Henry, the perils of this town are awful. Folks who value their lives will soon be hiring cells in bomb-proof lodging-houses. How did Pelton come to be dressing so late in the morning? Doesn't he go to his office?"

"I don't know. Up late last night, maybe; or perhaps he wasn't well. Anyhow, he's done for, poor chap. He had no partner, and as Jane's concerns were altogether in his hands, I dare say it will be an interesting job to transfer them. She is much shocked, naturally."

"What's to be done?"

"That is what she has been asking me. Of course there will have to be an accounting by Pelton's estate, and a transfer of the trust, which has a number of years to run yet. I told her she ought to have first-rate advice at once, and we telephoned over to Judge Holly, and he is coming to see her to-night."

"She knows the judge, does she?"

"Oh yes; she has always known him. He knew her father. I'm going over there to dinner."

"My gracious! Think of that unlucky Pelton flattened out so in his own bedroom. Henry, if you will go out, go carefully. Don't fall into the subway; avoid cabs—you can't afford them, and they're dangerous, anyhow; keep your weather-eye out for automobiles. It's a couple of days since they killed any one, and they must be hungry. If you must ride in the street-cars, sit as near the door as you can without getting in the draught. I saw a street-car burn clean up on the track this afternoon. They had to get the fire department out and play on it; a most curious and highly scandalous sight. Still, the street-cars with all their risks are safer than the other vehicles, for the company pays for what it runs over. Remember that you are an only son, and the affianced of an orphan whose trustee is dead, and step gingerly."

The fifth week in Lent.

"You're quite a stranger, Henry. You've dined out every night this week. I only see you at breakfast, and a man isn't much comfort at breakfast. I wish I had raised some girls, but I always did wish that. Are you going out to-night, son?"

"I'm going over to dine with Jane. There are matters of moment to be discussed."

"No doubt, and your impending marriage only a fortnight off."

"Judge Holly sent for me this afternoon."

"And how was the judge?"

"A good deal flustered, and he had a good deal to say."

"Ah?"

"Yes; since his appointment a week ago as Jane's trustee in Pelton's place, he has been forgathering with

Pelton's administrator, and they have got the seals off Pelton's books and various receptacles, and have been trying to find Jane's estate."

"Well, didn't Pelton keep his accounts straight?"

"Yes; there's plenty of accounts. His clerks did that. The accounts are satisfactory. The trouble is with the securities. They couldn't find them."

"Wasn't there a list of them?"

"Oh yes; they found the list. The list is splendid; most exemplary. But they haven't got the securities."

"Where did Pelton keep them?"

"He had a big safe-deposit box. They have found that and opened it. The box is safe, but it was empty."

"Had Pelton pledged them?"

"That's it. There were a lot of bonds that they haven't run down yet, but they have traced stocks enough through the transfer-books of various railways to get a pretty clear idea of what has happened. As trustee, Pelton had complete power. He evidently went into a big gamble in the spring, pledged a lot of Jane's papers, was caught in the May crush, and sold out. He bet what was left in an effort to get even, and the corn failure and the steel strike finished him. No wonder he kept away from his office! He was done. There is some real estate, and on that he has managed to raise enough to pay Jane her income. It was Heaven's mercy to him that that rock came through his window before the bigger one that hung over him had time to drop."

"Is there nothing left?"

"Certainly nothing compared with what is gone. The judge says there is the house, and some other real estate that is valuable. None of it is clear but the blast that cut Pelton off before he was quite ready seems to have saved Jane some equities and other remnants that are worth something."

"But you don't know what they are worth?"

"No; the tangle is too bad, the judge says, for any estimate to be worth anything yet. There is no record of what Pelton did. Some mortgages are recorded; there may be others that are not."

"Does Jane know it?"

"Not yet. The question is, who is to tell her, and when? Am I to tell her to-night? The invitations are out to the wedding. Must it be put off? The only thing I have done yet is to give up my steamer rooms. We can't go abroad, anyhow."

"Henry, this is getting too complicated for you and me. Ask for some tea, and see if your mother has come in yet. I think I heard her. Here she is. Come, Fanny, and have some tea. Henry's got a tale. The bark that carries his hopes is aground, and seems stove in. We need help to get her off. Tell her, Henry."

"The short of it is, mother, that our Jane has gone broke, and doesn't know it yet. Her trustee had stolen pretty much all her fortune."

"Mercy!"

"And the question is, Fanny, whether the wedding can go on, and whether Jane shall be told this tale of disaster before or after it."

"Is it really true, Charles?"

"Strictly, absolutely true. At least, so Henry says."

"Then of course she must know it. She may not want Henry if she has lost her money."

"There, Henry; that's a consideration. Jane may feel that you are a luxury beyond her present means. She may feel constrained to marry a richer man now. You'll have to tell her. If you don't, Judge Holly will. He's bound to. But, Fanny, how about putting the wedding off?"

"That's for Jane to say. It's bad luck to put off

weddings. I hope she won't. She's got her gown, and I've got mine, and I don't want to see either of them put away to get out of fashion. Then there are her presents."

"But, Fanny, Henry's only earning— How much was it last month, Henry?"

"A hundred and thirty, father, but really the practice is picking up."

"If Henry can't support her, Charles, you've got to. There's nothing the matter with Henry except that he's a beginner. Starting out to marry a poor girl on a very small income is one thing. This is a different case entirely. Jane is a dear girl, and will make the loveliest bride you ever saw. I'll share anything you've got with her."

"Very well, Fanny, but we won't be able to go up the Nile—not this year."

"The Nile will keep. The frocks won't. Karnak will be just as good style ten years from now as it is to-day."

"How do, Henry? Good man to have come early. Come and see the new presents."

"More?"

"Oh yes, lots more to-day. Some beautiful ones."

"Where's the good aunt?"

"Not down yet. Here they are. Look at these topazes. Aren't they lovely?"

"Put them on. There, now they *are* lovely. Are they real?"

"Surely. Look who sent them!"

"With the love of the Jarvises, eh? Oh yes, I guess they're real. And you too, Jane. You are real, too—a real person, who won't vanish into thin air when the clock strikes twelve and the fairy palace crumbles?"

"I a real person? Yes, Henry. Why not? Henry!

What's got into your voice? Let me look at you! Why did you say that?"

"Jane Hawkshaw, the detective and mind reader! Look hard, Jane. Look deep. What do you see?"

"Nothing but what I love, dear. And yet— What's happened, Henry? Have you brought some news?"

"Yes!"

"And not good news?"

"No, not exactly. Disconcerting sort of news, but not killing. The late Pelton stole a lot of your money, dear Jane. That's my news. There may be some left, but I fear not very much. It looks just now as though he had made a pretty clean sweep."

"How do you know about it, Henry?"

"I got it from Judge Holly this afternoon. I dare say he'll be here soon himself; this evening, perhaps. He's very low-spirited over it."

"But I had my income up to a month ago. How could it all go at once?"

"The judge will tell you. I fear you won't get any more income from your own estate for some time to come. Have you got some money in the bank?"

"Some; not a great deal. What does it all mean to me?"

"It means a great deal. It means being rather a poor woman instead of a rich one. It means living in a small house instead of a big one, thinking what you can afford instead of what you want, going without quantities of thing you have been used to having. It means all sorts of superficial changes, and it makes a poor man a worse match for you than he was before."

"But that's not all, Henry. That's not all!"

"That's enough. We can't unpack the whole of Pandora's box before dinner."

"Yes, but, Henry. It makes me a much worse match for a poor man than I was before."

"Do you think you can do better, Jane?"

"I am sure you could do better, Henry!"

"Oh, you flatter me. I don't think it. Who'd have me but you? Who'd take me second-hand? And if any one would have me, do you think I'm going to let the labor of years come to nothing, and go to work and court some new girl? Money's handy, dear Jane, but no particular lot of it is essential."

"N-no, Henry. But I had planned such pleasant uses for it, and I had hoped to do so many things for you. Besides, dear Henry, what are we to live on?"

"I hope there'll be salvage enough from your wreck to keep you from want, but, anyhow, it's for me to find means of support for both of us, and I have found them already."

"Where, Henry?"

"Chiefly at home, in the second-story front room, sitting in front of a wood fire, taking tea with mother. Also, in an office down-town."

"Your father!"

"Yes, Jane. Father and I. As for father, dear man, he's used to it. He has supported most of me these many years. Don't pity him. He likes it. It won't be for long, for I expect to be a prodigious wage-earner right away. Mother says, 'Oh, don't put off the wedding!' Cheer up, Jane. Set a storm-sail and head for port. And oh, don't throw me over! After all the ballast you've lost you can't spare another pound; and oh, dear Jane, I would hate it so!"

"You absurd Henry, you make me laugh. Here comes Aunt Felicia. Don't tell her yet. And here's William to say dinner's ready. William, please send word to Judge Holly that if he can come in this evening I should like to see him. And say Mr. Warden is here."

Ten days later.

"How goes the inquest, Henry?"

"Pretty well, father. There's going to be something left."

"Wasn't Pelton quite thorough?"

"Oh, he did his best. The quick assets are cleaned out absolutely. Everything that had gilt on its edge is gone, but, as I told you, there are some equities, and we have found a boxful of the old man's bad investments that Pelton never meddled with much. There's a collection of deeds to Western and Southern lands in half a dozen different states that must have looked like waste paper ten years ago, but the judge thinks they make interesting reading now. Father, I'm going to move my office!"

"So?"

"Yes; the judge says Jane's matters are going to be a long job, and that anyway there's room on his office door for another name, and that mine will look as well there as anywhere else."

"Great news! You'll get your office rent paid, anyhow."

"Much better than that. He was able to demonstrate that there is several times as much present income waiting for me in his office as I have been able to find so far in my own, and he talked hopefully about the future. He is a very pretty speaker, the judge is, when he has a mind to talk."

"There's no better office in town. You'll make a living yet. It's no very great trick for a well-equipped man, if you once get started. A little knowledge, a little talent, a little gumption, all the character you've got, and a day's work every day. The rest is a matter of opportunity, and that comes."

And so they were married, and the wedding was no

less lively than weddings ought to be, and the newspapers told all about it, and, as usual, somewhat more; and some of them, distressing but inevitable to tell, printed the bride's picture, besides making generous estimates of the value of the gifts. Every one knew that the bride was no longer an heiress of distinction, and everybody talked about it in private and ignored it in public. Everybody sympathized with her, and some persons pitied her, but many who were quite ready with pity, and even carried a supply of it with them to the wedding, were constrained to the conclusion that they had brought it to the wrong market. Somehow it wasn't that kind of a wedding, for, though it was fairly tearful at the church, and a good many women made furtive dabs with their handkerchiefs at their eyes and noses, and some elderly gentlemen snuffled, Major Brace, who was present, declared that he never was at a wedding which was less qualified by misgivings, or where the atmosphere was so heavily charged with affection and good-will. "We sunk the shop for the whole of two hours," said the major. "It was like real old times," and the intrepid man snuffled again and called for a cocktail, though it was barely five o'clock.

"Well, Charles, do you still expect to see the pyramids?"

"Give me time, Fanny, a little time. I'm not sixty yet, and there's lots of work in me. We'll see the pyramids at our leisure. Let them wait. I'd rather see my grandchildren than the pyramids any day. I'm glad you didn't put that wedding off. What's the use of having an only son if you can't spoil him?"

BELNAP

By Zona Gale

FROM the moment that Alla went to work in the clubhouse, Belnap pursued her. She did all that she could to avoid him, but he would call her to his table and she dared not refuse the command of the head waiter. The head waiter was a woman of forty, a little lame, extremely capable, and kind to the girls. But when Alla explained to her why she wished to change from Belnap's table, this woman said to her, "You are a fool," and made no change.

Between Belnap's orders of expensive dishes, he would tell her how much he loved her and how instead of serving him she might now be sitting beside him at some other table, ordering filet mignon and parfait. Under her voice she would answer him sharply:

"Save your breath, Mr. Belnap." And aloud: "Shall your filet be brown or rare?"

"Rare. And Alla! I love you. I've a little house in the country waiting for you. . . ."

"And it'll fall to pieces waiting for me. French dressing or mayonnaise, Mr. Belnap?"

"French. You little thing, I have never loved any one as I love you. I shall never love any one again as I love you. Alla, don't you understand . . . ?"

By then she would have taken his order down and would turn her back.

Twice Alla gave up the place, but both times they sent for her to come back and as her father was ill and in want, she returned to the club where the wages were enough to pay for their two rooms, and the tips provided the food for her father and herself. No one was more generous with tips than Belnap and often she dreamed of all that she could do for her father if

Belnap's purse were poured upon her, as he promised that it would be if only she would go with him to his little house in the country, among the apple trees. Also, he was an agreeable creature, and on the day when, between his order for a salad of pears stuffed with cheese, and his direction that there should be plenty of Bar-le-Duc he said: "Alla! I will give you a thousand dollars . . ." on that day she hesitated for one instant and looked at him. She saw the deep furrows between his eyes, his cleft chin, his even teeth, and his look already triumphant. "At what hour do you finish here?" he breathed, but Alla cried quite loudly: "I finish before you've finished, Mr. Belnap," so that he looked about him in annoyance. Alla was balancing on the table's edge a tray of empty dishes which she let crash to the floor crying: "Now they will not call me back here!"

On the death of her father she married a clerk, and she lived for thirty odd years in meager comfort. Her husband was by turns kind and irritable, she was by turns patient and complaining, and their two children were by turns impish and angelic. The days were a routine of cleaning and preparing for something which seemed never to come about.. Outside her house she knew that there were assemblages, disaster and stars, but these seldom concerned her, in the face of the needs of her children and her husband. All the days were the same.

At fifty, when her beauty was still marked, she heard from her doctor that the rich Mr. Belnap, now seventy, was living at a great hospital in the neighborhood. Her heart was kind and her life was humdrum, and so after brooding on the matter for days in the luxury of secrecy, she went secretly to the hospital and asked to see him.

Reading by a window in his brown bath gown, he

looked handsome and ill. She saw the deep furrows between his eyes, his cleft chin, and his look, perpetually triumphant. Alla, the pleasant-faced dimpled woman, sat down before him and said: "Mr. Belnap, I want you to know that I have always thought of you kindly, for your tips brought my father many comforts. I am Alla, who waited on you at the City Club. Perhaps you do not remember. . . ."

His face lighted, he took her hand, he cried: "Indeed I remember. And you are still beautiful."

"But for you," she continued, "many necessities even would have been denied my father."

He lifted his hand. "But tell me," he said, "have you sometimes thought of me?"

"Yes— and only with gratitude."

He leaned toward her.

"And of the night when you first went with me into the country. . . ."

She searched his face. His eyes were dreaming beyond her. He said with a sigh: "I have never forgotten those weeks in my little house with the apple trees."

She sprang to her feet and cried: "Mr. Belnap, I am Alla—your old waitress at the City Club."

"Yes," he said gently, "you are Alla. Can you doubt that I remember?"

THE DREAM OF RHONABWY

WHEN Rhonabwy and Kynwrig Vrychgoch and Cadwgan Vras came together to the house of Heilyn Goch, they saw an old hall, very black and having an upright gable, whence issued a great smoke; and on entering they found the floor full of puddles and mounds; and it was difficult to stand

Translated from the Welsh of the *Mabinogion* by Lady Charlotte Guest.

thereon, so slippery was it with the mire of cattle. And where the puddles were, a man might go up to his ankles in water and dirt. And there were boughs of holly spread over the floor, whereof the cattle had browsed the sprigs. When they came to the hall of the house, they beheld cells full of dust, and very gloomy and on one side an old crone making a fire. Whenever she felt cold, she cast a lapful of chaff upon the fire, and raised such a smoke that it was scarcely to be borne as it rose up the nostrils. And on the other side was a yellow calf-skin on the floor; a main privilege was it to any one who should get upon that hide.

When they had sat down, they asked where were the people of the house. And the crone spoke not but muttered. Thereupon behold the people of the house entered; a ruddy, clownish, curly-headed man, with a burthen of faggots on his back, and a pale, slender woman, carrying a bundle under her arms. They barely welcomed the men, and kindled a fire with the boughs. And the woman cooked and gave them to eat, barley bread and cheese and milk and water.

A storm of wind and rain arose so that to go forth with safety was hardly possible. Being weary with their journey, they laid themselves down and sought to sleep. When they looked at the couch it seemed to be made of a little coarse straw, full of dust and vermin with the stems of boughs sticking up there-through, for the cattle had eaten all the straw that was placed at the head and the foot. Upon it was stretched an old russet-coloured rug, thread-bare and ragged; and a coarse sheet full of slits was upon the rug, and an ill-stuffed pillow, and a worn-out cover upon the sheet. And after much suffering from the vermin, and from the discomfort of their couch, a heavy sleep fell on Rhonabwy's companions. But Rhonabwy, not being able either to

sleep or to rest, thought he should suffer less if he went to lie upon the yellow calf-skin that was stretched out on the floor. And there he slept.

As soon as sleep had come upon his eyes, it seemed to him that he was journeying with his companions across the plain of Argyngroeg, and he thought that he went toward Rhyd y Groed on the Severn. As he journeyed he heard a mighty noise, the like whereof heard he never before; and looking behind him, he beheld a youth with yellow curling hair, and with his beard newly trimmed, mounted on a chestnut horse. The rider wore a coat of yellow satin sewn with green silk, and on his thigh was a gold-hilted sword, with a scabbard of new leather of Cordova, belted with the skin of the deer, and clasped with gold. Over this was a scarf of yellow satin wrought with green silk. And the green of the caparison of the horse, and of his rider, was as green as the leaves of the fir-tree, and the yellow was as yellow as the blossom of the broom. So fierce was the aspect of the knight, that fear seized upon them and they began to flee.

The knight pursued them, and when the horse breathed forth, the men became distant from him, and when he drew in his breath, they were drawn near to him, even to the horse's chest.

When he had overtaken them, they besought his mercy.

"You have it gladly," said he. "Fear nought."

"Chieftain, since thou hast had mercy upon me, tell me also who thou art," said Rhonabwy.

"I will not conceal my lineage from thee, I am Iddawc the son of Mynyo, yet not by my name but by my nickname am I best known."

"And wilt thou tell us what thy nickname is?"

"I will tell you; it is Iddawc Cordd Prydain."

"Why, Chieftain," said Rhonabwy, "art thou called thus?"

"I will tell thee. I was one of the messengers between Arthur and Medrawd, his nephew, at the battle of Camlan; and I was then a reckless youth, and through my desire for battle, I kindled strife between them and stirred up wrath, whereas I had been sent by Arthur, the Emperor, to reason with Medrawd, and to show him that he was his foster-father and his uncle, and to seek for peace, lest the sons of the Kings of the Island of Britain, and of the nobles, should be slain. And whereas Arthur charged me with the fairest sayings he could think of, I uttered unto Medrawd the harshest I could devise. Therefore am I called Iddawc Cordd Prydain, for from this did the battle of Camlan ensue. And three nights before the end of the battle of Camlan I left, and went to the Llech Las in North Britain, to do penance. There I remained doing penance seven years and after that I gained pardon."

Then lo! they heard a mighty sound which was much louder than that which they had heard before, and when they looked round toward the sound, they beheld a ruddy youth, without beard or whiskers, noble of mien, and mounted on a stately courser. Upon the man was a dress of red satin wrought with yellow silk, and yellow were the borders of his scarf. Such parts of his apparel and of the trappings of his horse as were yellow, as yellow were they as the blossom of the broom, and such as were red, were as ruddy as the ruddiest blood in the world.

Then, behold the horseman overtook them, and he asked of Iddawc a share of the little men that were with him.

"That which is fitting for me to grant I will grant and thou shalt be a companion to them as I have been."

The horseman went away.

"Iddawc," inquired Rhonabwy, "who is that horseman?"

"Rhuvawn Pebyr, the son of Prince Deorthach."

They journeyed over the plain as far as the ford of Rhyd y Groes on the Severn. For a mile around the ford on both sides of the road, they saw tents and encampments, and there was the clamour of a mighty host. They came to the ford and there beheld Arthur sitting on a flat island below the ford, having Bedwini the Bishop on one side, and Gwarthgyd the son of Kar on the other. A tall, auburn-haired youth stood before him, with his sheathed sword in his hand, and clad in a coat and cap of jet-black satin. His face was white as ivory, and his eyebrows black, and such part of his wrist as could be seen between his glove and his sleeve was whiter than the lily and thicker than a warrior's ankle.

Then came Iddawc and they that were with him, and stood before Arthur and saluted him.

"Heaven grant thee good," said Arthur. "And where, Iddawc, didst thou find these little men?"

"I found them, lord, up yonder on the road."

The Emperor smiled.

"Lord," said Iddawc, "wherefore dost thou laugh?"

"Iddawc," replied Arthur, "I laugh not; but it pitieth me that men of such stature as these should have this island in their keeping, after the men that guarded it of yore."

Then said Iddawc, "Rhonabwy, dost thou see the ring with a stone set in it that is upon the Emperor's hand?"

"I see it," he answered.

"It is one of the properties of that stone to enable thee to remember that thou seest here tonight, and hadst thou not seen the stone, thou wouldest never have been able to remember aught thereof."

After this they saw a troop coming toward the ford. "Iddawc," inquired Rhonabwy, "to whom does yonder troop belong?"

"They are the fellows of Rhuvawn Pebyr the son of Prince Deorthach. These men are honourably served with mead and bragget, and are freely beloved by the daughters of the kings of the Island of Britain. And this they merit for they were ever in the front and the rear in every peril."

And Rhonabwy saw but one hue upon the men and the horses of this troop, for they were all as red as blood. When one of the knights rode forth from the troop, he was like a pillar of fire glancing athwart the sky. This troop encamped above the ford.

They then beheld another troop coming toward the ford and these from their horses' chests upward were whiter than the lily, and below blacker than jet. One of these knights went before the rest, spurring his horse into the ford in such a manner that the water dashed over Arthur and the Bishop, and those holding counsel with them, so that they were as wet as if they had been drenched in the river. And as he turned the head of his horse, the youth who stood before Arthur struck the horse over the nostrils with his sheathed sword, so that, had it been with the bare blade, it would have been a marvel if the bone had not been wounded as well as the flesh.

The knight drew his sword half out of the scabbard and asked of him, "Wherefore didst thou strike my horse? Whether was it in insult or in counsel unto me?"

"Thou dost indeed lack counsel. What madness caused thee to ride so furiously as to dash the water of the ford over Arthur, and the consecrated Bishop, and their counsellors, so that they were as wet as if they had been dragged out of the river?"

"As counsel then will I take it." So he turned his horse's head round toward his army.

"Iddawc," said Rhonabwy, "who was yonder knight?"

"The most eloquent and the wisest youth that is in this island; Adaon, the son of Taliesin."

"Who was the man that struck his horse?"

"A youth of froward nature; Elphin, the son of Gwyddno."

Then spake a tall and stately man, of noble and flowing speech, saying that it was a marvel that so vast a host should be assembled in so narrow a space, and that it was a still greater marvel that those should be there at that time who had promised to be by midday in the battle of Badon, fighting with Osla Gyllellvawr. "Whether thou mayest choose to proceed or not, I will proceed."

"Thou sayest well," said Arthur, "and we will go all together."

"Iddawc," said Rhonabwy, "who was the man who spoke so marvellously unto Arthur erewhile?"

"A man who may speak as boldly as he listeth, Caradawc Vreichvrws, his chief counsellor and cousin."

Then Iddawc took Rhonabwy behind him on his horse, and that mighty host moved forward, each troop in its order toward Cevndigoll. When they came to the middle of the ford, Iddawc turned his horse's head and Rhonabwy looked along the valley of the Severn. And he beheld two fair troops coming toward the ford. One troop there came of brilliant white, whereof every one of the men had a scarf of white satin with jet-black borders. And their banners were pure white, with black points to them all.

"Iddawc," said Rhonabwy, "who are yonder pure white troop?"

"They are the men of Norway, and March, the son

of Meirchion, is their prince. He is cousin unto Arthur."

Further on, Rhonabwy saw a troop whereof the men wore garments of jet black, with borders of pure white to every scarf. "Iddawc," said he, "who are the jet-black troop yonder?"

"They are the men of Denmark, and Edeyrn the son of Nudd is their prince."

When they had overtaken the host, Arthur and his army of mighty ones dismounted below Caer Badou, and Rhonabwy perceived that he and Iddawc journeyed the same road as Arthur. After they had dismounted he heard a great tumult and confusion amongst the host and such as were then at the flanks turned to the centre, and such as had been in the centre moved to the flanks. Then, behold he saw a knight coming, clad, both he and his horse, in mail of which the rings were whiter than the whitest lily, and the rivets redder than the ruddiest blood. And he rode amongst the host.

"Iddawc," said Rhonabwy, "will yonder host flee?"

"King Arthur never fled, and if this discourse were heard thou wert a lost man. As to the knight thou seest yonder, it is Kai. The fairest horseman is Kai in all Arthur's court; and the men who are at the front of the army hasten to the rear to see Kai ride, and the men who are in the centre flee to the side from the shock of his horse. And this is the cause of the confusion of the host."

Whereupon they heard a call made for Kadwr, Earl of Cornwall, whose duty it is to arm the king on the days of battle and warfare, and he arose with the sword of Arthur in his hand. The similitude of two serpents was upon the sword in gold. When the sword was drawn from its scabbard, it seemed as if two flames of fire burst forth from the jaws of the serpents, and then, so wonderful was the sword, that it was hard

for anyone to look upon it. And the host became still, and the tumult ceased, and the Earl returned to the tent.

A call was made for Eirynwych Amheibyn, Arthur's servant, a red, rough, ill-favoured man, having red whiskers with bristly hairs. He came on a tall red horse with the mane parted on each side, and he brought with him a large and beautiful sumpter pack. And the huge red youth dismounted before Arthur, and he drew a golden chair out of the pack, and a carpet of diapered satin. He spread the carpet before Arthur, and there was an apple of ruddy gold at each corner thereof, and he placed the chair upon the carpet. And so large was the chair that three armed warriors might have sat therein. Gwenn was the name of the carpet, and one of its properties was that whoever was upon it no one could see him and he could see everyone. And it would retain no colour but its own.

Arthur sat within the carpet, and Owain the son of Urien was standing before him. "Owain," said Arthur, "wilt thou play chess?"

"I will, lord," said Owain. And the red youth brought the chess for Arthur and Owain; golden pieces and a board of silver. And they began to play.

And when they were best amused with their game, they saw a white tent with a red canopy and the figure of a jet-black serpent on the top of the tent, and red glaring venomous eyes and a red flaming tongue. And there came a young page, bearing a heavy three-edged sword with a golden hilt, in a scabbard of fine leather tipped with gold. He came to the place where the Emperor and Owain were playing at chess.

The youth saluted Owain. Owain marvelled that the youth should salute him and should not have saluted the Emperor Arthur. And Arthur knew what was in Owain's thought. And he said to Owain, "Marvel not

that the youth salutes thee now, for he saluted me erewhile; and it is unto thee that his errand is."

Then said the youth unto Owain, "Lord, is it with thy leave that the young pages and attendants of the Emperor harass and torment and worry thy Ravens? And if it be not with thy leave, cause the Emperor to forbid them."

"Lord," said Owain, "thou hearest what the youth says; if it seem good to thee, forbid them from my Ravens."

"Play thy game," said he. Then the youth returned to the tent.

That game did they finish, and another they began, and when they were in the midst of the game, behold, a ruddy young man with auburn curling hair, came forth from a yellow tent on the summit of which was the figure of a red lion. He came to the place where Arthur and Owain were playing at chess. And he saluted him. And Owain was troubled at his salutation but Arthur minded it no more than before.

The youth said to Owain, "Is it not against thy will that the attendants of the Emperor harass thy Ravens, killing some and worrying others? If against thy will it be, beseech him to forbid them."

"Lord," said Owain, "forbid thy men if it seem good to thee."

"Play thy game," said the Emperor. And the youth returned to the tent.

And that game was ended and another begun. As they were beginning the first move of the game, they beheld at a small distance from them a tent speckled yellow, the largest ever seen, and the figure of an eagle in gold upon it, and a precious stone in the eagle's head. Coming out of the tent they saw a youth with thick yellow hair and a scarf of blue satin and a brooch of gold in the scarf on his right shoulder as large as a

warrior's middle finger. In the hand of the youth was a lance with a newly sharpened head; and upon the lance a banner displayed.

Fiercely angry, and with rapid pace, came the youth to the place where Arthur was playing at chess with Owain. And they perceived that he was wroth. Thereupon he saluted Owain and told him that his Ravens had been killed, the chief part of them, and that such of them as were not slain were so wounded and bruised that not one of them could raise its wings a single fathom above the earth.

"Lord," said Owain, "forbid thy men."

"Play," said he, "if it please thee."

Then said Owain to the youth, "Go back, and wherever thou findest the strife at the thickest, there lift up the banner, and let come what pleases Heaven."

The youth returned to the place where the strife bore hardest upon the Ravens, and he lifted up the banner; and as he did so, they all rose in the air, wrathful and fierce and high of spirit, clapping their wings in the wind, and shaking off the weariness that was upon them. Recovering their energy and courage, furiously and with exultation did they, with one sweep, descend upon the heads of the men, who had erewhile caused them anger and pain and damage, and they seized some by the heads and others by the eyes, and some by the ears, and others by the arms and carried them up into the air; and in the air there was a mighty tumult with the flapping of the wings of the triumphant Ravens, and with their croaking; and there was another mighty tumult with the groaning of the men that were being torn and wounded, and some of whom were slain.

And Arthur and Owain marvelled at the tumult as they played at chess; and, looking, they perceived a knight upon a dun-coloured horse coming toward them. Both the knight and his horse were fully equipped with

heavy foreign armour. A gold-hilted sword had the youth upon his thigh, in a scabbard of light blue and tipped with Spanish laton. A helmet of gold was on the head of the knight, set with precious stones of virtue and at the top of the helmet was the image of a flame-coloured leopard with two ruby-red stones in its head, so that it was astonishing for a warrior, however stout his heart, to look at the face of the leopard, much more at the face of the knight. He had in his hand a blue-shafted lance, and from the haft to the point it was stained crimson-red with the blood of the Ravens.

The knight came to the place where Arthur and Owain were seated at chess. They perceived that he was harassed and vexed and weary. The youth saluted Arthur and told him that the Ravens of Owain were slaying his young men and attendants. Arthur looked at Owain and said,

"Forbid thy Ravens."

"Lord," answered Owain, "play thy game."

They played and the knight returned to the strife, and the Ravens were not forbidden any more than before.

When they had played awhile, they heard a mighty tumult, and a wailing of men, and a croaking of Ravens, and they carried the men in their strength into the air, and, tearing them betwixt them, let them fall piecemeal to the earth. During the tumult they saw a knight coming toward them on a light grey horse, and the knight and the horse were fully accoutred with heavy blue armour. A robe of honour of yellow diapered satin was upon the knight and upon his thigh a sword, long and three-edged and heavy. A golden helmet was upon the head of this knight wherein were set sapphire stones of great virtue. At the top of the helmet was the figure of a flame-coloured lion, with a fiery-red tongue, issuing about a foot from his mouth,

and with venomous eyes, crimson-red, in his head. The knight came bearing a thick ashen lance, the head whereof, which had been newly steeped in blood, overlaid with silver.

The youth saluted the Emperor. "Lord," said he, "carest thou not for the slaying of thy pages, and thy young men, and the sons of the nobles of the Island of Britain, whereby it will be difficult to defend this island from henceforward for ever?"

"Owain," said Arthur, "forbid thy Ravens."

"Play this game, lord," said Owain.

So they finished the game and began another; and as they were finishing that game, lo, they heard a great tumult and a clamour of armed men, and a croaking of Ravens, and a flapping of wings in the air, as they flung down the armour entire to the ground and the men and the horses piecemeal. Then they saw coming, a knight on a lofty-headed piebald horse, and the knight and horse were equipped with arms of speckled yellow, variegated with Spanish laton. Upon him was a robe of honour and above the robe he wore a sword, three-edged and bright with a golden hilt. Upon the head of the knight was a helmet of yellow laton, with sparkling stones of crystal, and at the crest of the helmet was the figure of a griffin with a stone of many virtues in its head. And he had an ashen spear in his hand with a round shaft, coloured with azure blue.

Wrathfully came the knight to the place where Arthur was, and he told him that the Ravens had slain his household and the sons of the chief men of this island, and he besought him to cause Owain to forbid his Ravens. And Arthur besought Owain to forbid them. Then Arthur took the golden chessmen that were upon the board and crushed them till they became as dust. Then Owain ordered Gwres the son of Rheged to lower his banner. It was lowered and all was peace.

Then Rhonabwy enquired of Iddawc who were the first three men who came to Owain, to tell him his Ravens were being slain.

Said Iddawc, "They were men who grieved that Owain should suffer loss, his fellow-chieftains and companions, Selyv, Garwyn, and Gwgawn, and Gwres, the son of Rheged, he who bears the banner in the day of battle and strife."

"Who," said Rhonabwy, "were the last three men who came to Arthur, and told him that the Ravens were slaughtering his men?"

"The best of men," said Iddawc, "and the bravest, and who would grieve exceedingly that Arthur should have damage in aught; Blathaon, and Rhuvawn Pebyr, and Hyveidd Unllenn."

With that behold four and twenty knights came from Osla Gyllellvawr, to crave a truce of Arthur for a fortnight and a month. Arthur rose and went to take counsel; and he came to where a tall, auburn, curly-headed man was, a little way off, and there he assembled his counsellors.

"Iddawc," said Rhonabwy, "who was the auburn-haired man to whom they came just now?"

"Rhun, the son of Maelgwn Gwynedd, a man whose prerogative it is that he may join in counsel with all."

"And wherefore did they admit into counsel with men of such dignity as are yonder a stripling so young as Kadyriaith the son of Saidi?"

"Because there is not throughout Britain a man better skilled in counsel than he."

Thereupon behold bards came and recited verses before Arthur, and no man understood these verses save Kadyriaith only, save that they were in Arthur's praise.

And lo, there came four-and-twenty asses with burthens of gold and silver, and a tired, way-worn man

with each of them, bringing tribute to Arthur from the Isles of Greece.

Then Kadyriaith the son of Saidi besought that a truce might be granted to Osla Gyllellvawr for the space of a fortnight and a month; and that the asses and the burthens they carried might be given to the bards, to be to them as a reward for their stay and that their verse might be recompensed during the time of the truce. Thus it was settled.

"Rhonabwy," said Iddawc, "would it not be wrong to forbid a youth who can give counsel so liberal as this from coming to the councils of his Lord?"

Then Kai arose, and he said, "Whosoever will follow Arthur, let him be with him tonight in Cornwall, and whosoever will not, let him be opposed to Arthur even during the truce."

And through the greatness of the tumult that ensued, Rhonabwy awoke. When he awoke he was upon the yellow calf-skin, having slept three nights and three days.

And this tale is called the Dream of Rhonabwy. This is the reason that no one knows the dream without a book, neither bard nor gifted seer, because of the various colours of the arms and of the panoply and the precious scarfs, and the virtue-bearing stones.

PAPAGO WEDDING

By Mary Austin

THERE was a Papago woman out of Pantak who had a marriage paper from a white man after she had borne him five children, and the man himself was in love with another woman. This Shuler was the first to raise cotton for selling in the Gila Valley—but the Pimas and Papagoes had raised it

long before that—and the girl went with him willingly. As to the writing of marriage, it was not then understood that the white man is not master of his heart, but is mastered by it, so that if it is not fixed in writing it becomes unstable like water and is puddled in the lowest place. The Sisters at San Xavier del Bac had taught her to clean and cook. Shuler called her Susie, which was nearest to her Papago name, and was fond of the children. He sent them to school as they came along, and had carpets in the house.

In all things Susie was a good wife to him, though she had no writing of marriage and she never wore a hat. This was a mistake which she learned from the sisters. They, being holy women, had no notion of the brujeria which is worked in the heart of the white man by a hat. Into the presence of their God also, without that which passes for a hat, they do not go. Even after her children were old enough to notice it, Susie went about the country with a handkerchief tied over her hair, which was long and smooth on either side of her face, like the shut wings of a raven.

By the time Susie's children were as tall as their mother, there were many white ranchers in the Gila country, with their white wives, who are like Papago women in this, that if they see a man upstanding and prosperous, they think only that he might make some woman happy, and if they have a cousin or a friend, that she should be the woman. Also the white ones think it so shameful for a man to take a woman to his house without a writing that they have no scruple to take him away from her. At Rinconada there was a woman with large breasts, surpassing well looking, and with many hats. She had no husband and was new to the country, and when Shuler drove her about to look at it, she wore each time a different hat.

This the Papagoes observed, and, not having visited

Susie when she was happy with her man, they went now in numbers, and by this Susie understood that it was in their hearts that she might have need of them. For it was well known that the white woman had told Shuler that it was a shame for him to have his children going about with a Papago woman who had only a handkerchief to cover her head. She said it was keeping Shuler back from being the principal man among the cotton growers of Gila Valley, to have in his house a woman who would come there without a writing. And when the other white women heard that she had said that, they said the same thing. Shuler said, "My God, this is the truth, I know it," and the woman said that she would go to Susie and tell her that she ought to go back to her own people and not be a shame to her children and Shuler. There was a man from Pantak on the road, who saw them go, and turned in his tracks and went back, in case Susie should need him, for the Papagoes, when it is their kin against whom there is brujeria made, have in-knowing hearts. Susie sat in the best room with the woman and was polite. "If you want Shuler," she said, "you can have him, but I stay with my children." The white woman grew red in the face and went out to Shuler in the field where he was pretending to look after something, and they went away together.

After that Shuler would not go to the ranch except of necessity. He went around talking to his white friends. "My God," he kept saying, "what can I do, with my children in the hands of that Papago?" Then he sent a lawyer to Susie to say that if she would go away and not shame his children with a mother who had no marriage writing and no hat, he would give her money, so much every month. But the children all came in the room and stood by her, and Susie said, "What I want with money when I got my children and

this good ranch?" Then Shuler said "My God!" again, and "What can I do?"

The lawyer said he could tell the Judge that Susie was not a proper person to have care of his children, and the Judge would take them away from Susie and give them to Shuler. But when the day came for Susie to come into court, it was seen that though she had a handkerchief on her hair, her dress was good, and the fringe of her shawl was long and fine. All the five children came also, with new clothes, well looking. "My God!" said Shuler, "I must get those kids away from that Papago and into the hands of a white woman." But the white people who had come to see the children taken away saw that although the five looked like Shuler, they had their mouths shut like Papagoes; so they waited to see how things turned out.

Shuler's lawyer makes a long speech about how Shuler loves his children, and how sorry he is in his heart to see them growing up like Papagoes, and water is coming out of Shuler's eyes. Then the Judge asks Susie if she has anything to say why her children shall not be taken away.

"You want to take these children away and giff them to Shuler?" Susie asks him. "What for you giff them to Shuler?" says Susie, and the white people are listening. She says, "Shuler's not the father of them. Thees children all got different fathers," says Susie. "Shuler—"

Then she makes a sign with her hand. I tell you if a woman makes that sign to a Papago he could laugh himself dead but he would not laugh off that. Some of the white people who have been in the country a long time know that sign and they begin to laugh.

Shuler's lawyer jumps up. . . . "Your Honour, I object——"

The Judge waves his hand. "I warn you the Court

cannot go behind the testimony of the mother in such a case. . . ."

By this time everybody is laughing, so that they do not hear what the lawyer says. Shuler is trying to get out of the side door, and the Judge is shaking hands with Susie.

"You tell Shuler," she says, "if he wants people to think hees the father of thees children he better giff me a writing. Then maybe I think so myself."

"I will," said the Judge, and maybe two, three days after that he takes Shuler out to the ranch and makes the marriage writing. Then all the children come around Susie and say, "Now, Mother, you will have to wear a hat." Susie, she says, "Go, children, and ask your father." But it is not known to the Papagoes what happened after that.

GOING INTO EXILE

By Liam O'Flaherty

PATRICK FEENEY'S cabin was crowded with people. In the large kitchen men, women, and children lined the walls, three deep in places, sitting on forms, chairs, stools, and on one another's knees. On the cement floor three couples were dancing a jig and raising a quantity of dust, which was, however, soon sucked up the chimney by the huge turf fire that blazed on the hearth. The only clear space in the kitchen was the corner to the left of the fireplace, where Pat Mullaney sat on a yellow chair, with his right ankle resting on his left knee, a spotted red handkerchief on his head that reeked with perspiration, and his red face contorting as he played a tattered old accordion. One door was shut and the tins hanging on it gleamed in the firelight. The opposite door was open and over the

heads of the small boys that crowded in it and outside it, peering in at the dancing couples in the kitchen, a starry June sky was visible and, beneath the sky, shadowy grey crags and misty, whitish fields lay motionless, still and sombre. There was a deep, calm silence outside the cabin and within the cabin, in spite of the music and dancing in the kitchen and the singing in the little room to the left, where Patrick Feeney's eldest son Michael sat on the bed with three other young men, there was a haunting melancholy in the air.

The people were dancing, laughing and singing with a certain forced and boisterous gaiety that failed to hide from them the real cause of their being there, dancing, singing and laughing. For the dance was on account of Patrick Feeney's two children, Mary and Michael, who were going to the United States on the following morning.

Feeney himself, a black-bearded, red-faced, middle-aged peasant, with white ivory buttons on his blue frieze shirt and his hands stuck in his leather waist belt, wandered restlessly about the kitchen, urging the people to sing and dance, while his mind was in agony all the time, thinking that on the following day he would lose his two eldest children, never to see them again perhaps. He kept talking to everybody about amusing things, shouted at the dancers and behaved in a boisterous and abandoned manner. But every now and then he had to leave the kitchen, under the pretence of going to the pigsty to look at a young pig that was supposed to be ill. He would stand, however, upright against his gable and look gloomily at some star or other, while his mind struggled with vague and peculiar ideas that wandered about in it. He could make nothing at all of his thoughts, but a lump always came up his throat, and he shivered, although the night was warm.

Then he would sigh and say with a contraction of his neck: "Oh, it's a queer world this and no doubt about it. So it is." Then he would go back to the cabin again and begin to urge on the dance, laughing, shouting and stamping on the floor.

Towards dawn, when the floor was crowded with couples, arranged in fours, stamping on the floor and going to and fro, dancing the "Walls of Limerick," Feeney was going out to the gable when his son Michael followed him out. The two of them walked side by side about the yard over the grey sea pebbles that had been strewn there the previous day. They walked in silence and yawned without need, pretending to be taking the air. But each of them was very excited. Michael was taller than his father and not so thickly built, but the shabby blue serge suit that he had bought for going to America was too narrow for his broad shoulders and the coat was too wide around the waist. He moved clumsily in it and his hands appeared altogether too bony and big and red, and he didn't know what to do with them. During his twenty-one years of life he had never worn anything other than the homespun clothes of Inverara, and the shop-made clothes appeared as strange to him and as uncomfortable as a dress suit worn by a man working in a sewer. His face was flushed a bright red and his blue eyes shone with excitement. Now and again he wiped the perspiration from his forehead with the lining of his grey tweed cap.

At last Patrick Feeney reached his usual position at the gable end. He halted, balanced himself on his heels with his hands in his waist belt, coughed and said, "It's going to be a warm day." The son came up beside him, folded his arms and leaned his right shoulder against the gable.

"It was kind of Uncle Ned to lend the money for the

dance, father," he said. "I'd hate to think that we'd have to go without something or other, just the same as everybody else has. I'll send you that money the very first money I earn, father . . . even before I pay Aunt Mary for my passage money. I should have all that money paid off in four months, and then I'll have some more money to send you by Christmas."

And Michael felt very strong and manly recounting what he was going to do when he got to Boston, Massachusetts. He told himself that with his great strength he would earn a great deal of money. Conscious of his youth and his strength and lusting for adventurous life, for the moment he forgot the ache in his heart that the thought of leaving his father inspired in him.

The father was silent for some time. He was looking at the sky with his lower lip hanging, thinking of nothing. At last he sighed as a memory struck him. "What is it?" said the son. "Don't weaken, for God's sake. You will only make it hard for me." "Fooh!" said the father suddenly with pretended gruffness. "Who is weakening? I'm afraid that your new clothes make you impudent." Then he was silent for a moment and continued in a low voice: "I was thinking of that potato field you sowed alone last spring the time I had the influenza. I never set eyes on the man that could do it better. It's a cruel world that takes you away from the land that God made you for."

"Oh, what are you talking about, father?" said Michael irritably. "Sure what did anybody ever get out of the land but poverty and hard work and potatoes and salt?"

"Ah yes," said the father with a sigh, "but it's your own, the land, and over there"—he waved his hand at the western sky—"you'll be giving your sweat to some other man's land, or what's equal to it."

"Indeed," muttered Michael, looking at the ground with a melancholy expression in his eyes, "it's poor encouragement you are giving me."

They stood in silence fully five minutes. Each hungered to embrace the other, to cry, to beat the air, to scream with excess of sorrow. But they stood silent and sombre, like nature about them, hugging their woe. Then they went back to the cabin. Michael went into the little room to the left of the kitchen, to the three young men who fished in the same curragh with him and were his bosom friends. The father walked into the large bedroom to the right of the kitchen.

The large bedroom was also crowded with people. A large table was laid for tea in the centre of the room and about a dozen young men were sitting at it, drinking tea and eating buttered raisin cake. Mrs. Feeney was bustling about the table, serving the food and urging them to eat. She was assisted by her two younger daughters and by another woman, a relative of her own. Her eldest daughter Mary, who was going to the United States that day, was sitting on the edge of the bed with several other young women. The bed was a large four poster bed with a deal canopy over it, painted red, and the young women were huddled together on it. So that there must have been about a dozen of them there. They were Mary Feeney's particular friends, and they stayed with her in that uncomfortable position just to show how much they liked her. It was a custom.

Mary herself sat on the edge of the bed with her legs dangling. She was a pretty, dark-haired girl of nineteen, with dimpled, plump, red cheeks and ruminative brown eyes that seemed to cause little wrinkles to come and go in her little low forehead. Her nose was soft and small and rounded. Her mouth was small

and the lips were red and open. Beneath her white blouse that was frilled at the neck and her navy blue skirt that outlined her limbs as she sat on the edge of the bed, her body was plump, soft, well-moulded and in some manner exuded a feeling of freshness and innocence. So that she seemed to have been born to be fondled and admired in luxurious surroundings instead of having been born a peasant's daughter, who had to go to the United States that day to work as a servant or maybe in a factory.

And as she sat on the edge of the bed crushing her little handkerchief between her palms, she kept thinking feverishly of the United States, at one moment with fear and loathing, at the next with desire and longing. Unlike her brother she did not think of the work she was going to do or the money that she was going to earn. Other things troubled her, things of which she was half ashamed, half afraid, thoughts of love and of foreign men and of clothes and of houses where there were more than three rooms and where people ate meat every day. She was fond of life, and several young men among the local gentry had admired her in Inverara. But . . .

She happened to look up and she caught her father's eyes as he stood silently by the window with his hands stuck in his waist belt. His eyes rested on hers for a moment and then he dropped them without smiling, and with his lips compressed he walked down into the kitchen. She shuddered slightly. She was a little afraid of her father, although she knew that he loved her very much and he was very kind to her. But the winter before he had whipped her with a dried willow rod, when he caught her one evening behind Tim Hernon's cabin after nightfall, with Tim Hernon's son Bartly's arms around her waist and he kissing her. Ever since, she always shivered slightly when her father

touched her or spoke to her. "Oho!" said an old peasant who sat at the table wtih a saucer full of tea in his hand and his grey flannel shirt open at his thin, hairy, wrinkled neck. "Oho! indeed, but it's a disgrace to the island of Inverara to let such a beautiful woman as your daughter go away, Mrs. Feeney. If I were a young man, I'll be flayed alive if I'd let her go."

There was a laugh and some of the women on the bed, said: "Bad cess to you, Patsy Coyne, if you haven't too much impudence, it's a caution." But the laugh soon died. The young men sitting at the table felt embarrassed and kept looking at one another sheepishly, as if each tried to find out if the others were in love with Mary Feeney.

"Oh, well, God is good," said Mrs. Feeney, as she wiped her lips with the tip of her bright, clean, check apron. "What will be must be, and sure there is hope from the sea, but there is no hope from the grave. It is sad and the poor have to suffer, but . . ." Mrs. Feeney stopped suddenly, aware that all these platitudes meant nothing whatsoever. Like her husband she was unable to think intelligibly about her two children going away. Whenever the reality of their going away, maybe for ever, three thousand miles into a vast unknown world, came before her mind, it seemed that a thin bar of some hard metal thrust itself forward from her brain and rested behind the wall of her forehead. So that almost immediately she became stupidly conscious of the pain caused by the imaginary bar of metal and she forgot the dread prospect of her children going away. But her mind grappled with the things about her busily and efficiently, with the preparation of food, with the entertaining of her guests, with the numerous little things that have to be done in a house where there is a party and which only a woman can do properly. These little things, in a manner, saved her, for the

moment at least, from bursting into tears whenever she looked at her daughter and whenever she thought of her son, whom she loved most of all her children, because perhaps she nearly died giving birth to him and he had been very delicate until he was twelve years old. So she laughed down in her breast a funny laugh she had that made her heave, where her check apron rose out from the waist band in a deep curve. "A person begins to talk," she said with a shrug of her shoulders sideways, "and then a person says foolish things."

"That's true," said the old peasant, noisily pouring more tea from his cup to his saucer.

But Mary knew by her mother laughing that way that she was very near being hysterical. She always laughed that way before she had one of her fits of hysterics. And Mary's heart stopped beating suddenly and then began again at an awful rate as her eyes became acutely conscious of her mother's body, the rotund, short body with the wonderful mass of fair hair growing grey at the temples and the fair face with the soft liquid brown eyes, that grew hard and piercing for a moment as they looked at a thing and then grew soft and liquid again, and the thin-lipped small mouth with the beautiful white teeth and the deep perpendicular grooves in the upper lip and the tremor that always came in the corner of the mouth, with love, when she looked at her children. Mary became acutely conscious of all these little points, as well as of the little black spot that was on her left breast below the nipple and the swelling that came now and again in her legs and caused her to have hysterics and would one day cause her death. And she was stricken with horror at the thought of leaving her mother and at the selfishness of her thoughts. She had never been prone to thinking of anything important but now, somehow for a mo-

ment, she had a glimpse of her mother's life that made her shiver and hate herself as a cruel, heartless, lazy, selfish wretch. Her mother's life loomed up before her eyes, a life of continual misery and suffering, hard work, birth pangs, sickness and again hard work and hunger and anxiety. It loomed up and then it fled again, a little mist came before her eyes and she jumped down from the bed, with the jaunty twirl of her head that was her habit when she set her body in motion.

"Sit down for a while, mother," she whispered, toying with one of the black ivory buttons on her mother's brown bodice. "I'll look after the table." "No, no," murmured the mother with a shake of her whole body, "I'm not a bit tired. Sit down, my treasure. You have a long way to travel today."

And Mary sighed and went back to the bed again.

At last somebody said: "It's broad daylight." And immediately everybody looked out and said: "So it is, and may God be praised." The change from the starry night to the grey, sharp dawn was hard to notice until it had arrived. People looked out and saw the morning light sneaking over the crags silently, along the ground, pushing the mist banks upwards. The stars were growing dim. A long way off invisible sparrows were chirping in their ivied perch in some distant hill or other. Another day had arrived and even as the people looked at it, yawned and began to search for their hats, caps and shawls preparing to go home, the day grew and spread its light and made things move and give voice. Cocks crew, blackbirds carolled, a dog let loose from a cabin by an early riser chased madly after an imaginary robber, barking as if his tail were on fire. The people said good-bye and began to stream forth from Feeney's cabin. They were going to their homes to see to the morning's work before going to Kilmurrage to see the

emigrants off on the steamer to the mainland. Soon the cabin was empty except for the family.

All the family gathered into the kitchen and stood about for some minutes talking sleepily of the dance and of the people who had been present. Mrs. Feeney tried to persuade everybody to go to bed, but everybody refused. It was four o'clock and Michael and Mary would have to set out for Kilmurrage at nine. So tea was made and they all sat about for an hour drinking it and eating raisin cake and talking. They only talked of the dance and of the people who had been present.

There were eight of them there, the father and mother and six children. The youngest child was Thomas, a thin boy of twelve, whose lungs made a singing sound every time he breathed. The next was Bridget, a girl of fourteen, with dancing eyes and a habit of shaking her short golden curls every now and then for no apparent reason. Then there were the twins, Julia and Margaret, quiet, rather stupid, flat-faced girls of sixteen. Both their upper front teeth protruded slightly and they were both great workers and very obedient to their mother. They were all sitting at the table, having just finished a third large pot of tea, when suddenly the mother hastily gulped down the remainder of the tea in her cup, dropped the cup with a clatter to her saucer and sobbed once through her nose.

"Now mother," said Michael sternly, "what's the good of this work?"

"No, you are right, my pulse," she replied quietly. "Only I was just thinking how nice it is to sit here surrounded by all my children, all my little birds in my nest, and then two of them going to fly away made me sad." And she laughed, pretending to treat it as a foolish joke.

"Oh, that be damned for a story," said the father,

wiping his mouth on his sleeve; "there's work to be done. You Julia, go and get the horse. Margaret, you milk the cow and see that you give enough milk to the calf this morning." And he ordered everybody about as if it were an ordinary day of work.

But Michael and Mary had nothing to do and they sat about miserably conscious that they had cut adrift from the routine of their home life. They no longer had any place in it. In a few hours they would be homeless wanderers. Now that they were cut adrift from it, the poverty and sordidness of their home life appeared to them under the aspect of comfort and plenty.

So the morning passed until breakfast time at seven o'clock. The morning's work was finished and the family was gathered together again. The meal passed in a dead silence. Drowsy after the sleepless night and conscious that the parting would come in a few hours, nobody wanted to talk. Everybody had an egg for breakfast in honour of the occasion. Mrs. Feeney, after her usual habit, tried to give her egg first to Michael, then to Mary, and as each refused it, she ate a little herself and gave the remainder to little Thomas who had the singing in his chest. Then the breakfast was cleared away. The father went to put the creels on the mare so as to take the luggage into Kilmurrage. Michael and Mary got the luggage ready and began to get dressed. The mother and the other children tidied up the house. People from the village began to come into the kitchen, as was customary, in order to accompany the emigrants from their home to Kilmurrage.

At last everything was ready. Mrs. Feeney had exhausted all excuses for moving about, engaged on trivial tasks. She had to go into the big bedroom where Mary was putting on her new hat. The mother sat on

a chair by the window, her face contorting on account of the flood of tears she was keeping back. Michael moved about the room uneasily, his two hands knotting a big red handkerchief behind his back. Mary twisted about in front of the mirror that hung over the black wooden mantelpiece. She was spending a long time with the hat. It was the first one she had ever worn, but it fitted her beautifully, and it was in excellent taste. It was given to her by the schoolmistress, who was very fond of her, and she herself had taken it in a little. She had an instinct for beauty in dress and deportment.

But the mother, looking at how well her daughter wore the cheap navy blue costume and the white frilled blouse, and the little round black hat with a fat, fluffy, glossy curl covering each ear, and the black silk stockings with blue clocks in them, and the little black shoes that had laces of three colours in them, got suddenly enraged with . . . She didn't know with what she got enraged. But for the moment she hated her daughter's beauty, and she remembered all the anguish of giving birth to her and nursing her and toiling for her, for no other purpose than to lose her now and let her go away, maybe to be ravished wantonly because of her beauty and her love of gaiety. A cloud of mad jealousy and hatred against this impersonal beauty that she saw in her daughter almost suffocated the mother, and she stretched out her hands in front of her unconsciously and then just as suddenly her anger vanished like a puff of smoke, and she burst into wild tears, wailing: "My children, oh, my children, far over the sea you will be carried from me, your mother." And she began to rock herself and she threw her apron over her head.

Immediately the cabin was full of the sound of bitter wailing. A dismal cry rose from the women gathered in the kitchen. "Far over the sea they will be carried," began woman after woman, and they all rocked them-

selves and hid their heads in their aprons. Michael's mongrel dog began to howl on the hearth. Little Thomas sat down on the hearth beside the dog and, putting his arms around him, he began to cry, although he didn't know exactly why he was crying, but he felt melancholy on account of the dog howling and so many people being about.

In the bedroom the son and daughter, on their knees, clung to their mother, who held their heads between her hands and rained kisses on both heads ravenously. After the first wave of tears she had stopped weeping. The tears still ran down her cheeks, but her eyes gleamed and they were dry. There was a fierce look in them as she searched all over the heads of her two children with them, with her brows contracted, searching with a fierce terror-stricekn expression, as if by the intensity of her stare she hoped to keep a living photograph of them before her mind. With her quivering lips she made a queer sound like "im-m-m-m" and she kept kissing. Her right hand clutched at Mary's left shoulder and with her left she fondled the back of Michael's neck. The two children were sobbing freely. They must have stayed that way a quarter of an hour.

Then the father came into the room, dressed in his best clothes. He wore a new frieze waistcoat, with a grey and black front and a white back. He held his soft black felt hat in one hand and in the other hand he had a bottle of holy water. He coughed and said in a weak gentle voice that was strange to him, as he touched his son: "Come now, it is time."

Mary and Michael got to their feet. The father sprinkled them with holy water and they crossed themselves. Then, without looking at their mother, who lay in the chair with her hands clasped on her lap, looking at the ground in a silent tearless stupor, they left the room. Each hurriedly kissed little Thomas, who was

not going to Kilmurrage, and then, hand in hand, they left the house. As Michael was going out the door he picked a piece of loose whitewash from the wall and put it in his pocket. The people filed out after them, down the yard and on to the road, like a funeral procession. The mother was left in the house with little Thomas and two old peasant women from the village. Nobody spoke in the cabin for a long time.

Then the mother rose and came into the kitchen. She looked at the two women, at her little son and at the hearth, as if she were looking for something she had lost. Then she threw her hands into the air and ran out into the yard.

"Come back," she screamed; "come back to me."

She looked wildly down the road with dilated nostrils, her bosom heaving. But there was nobody in sight. Nobody replied. There was a crooked stretch of limestone road, surrounded by grey crags that were scorched by the sun. The road ended in a hill and then dropped out of sight. The hot June day was silent. Listening foolishly for an answering cry, the mother imagined she could hear the crags simmering under the hot rays of the sun. It was something in her head that was singing.

The two old women led her back into the kitchen. "There is nothing that time will not cure," said one. "Yes. Time and patience," said the other.

THE SOUL CAGES

By T. Crofton Croker

JACK DOGHERTY lived on the coast of county Clare. Jack was a fisherman, like his father and grandfather before him. Like them, too, he lived alone (but for the wife), and in the same spot. People wondered why the Dogherty family were so fond of

that wild place, far from human kind, and in the midst of huge shattered rocks, with nothing but the wide ocean to look upon. But they had good reasons for it.

The place was the only spot on that part of the coast where anybody could well live. There was a neat little creek, where a boat might lie as snug as a puffin in her nest, and from this creek a ledge of sunken rocks ran into the sea. When the Atlantic, according to custom, was raging with a storm, and a good westerly wind was blowing strong on the coast, many a richly laden ship went to pieces on these rocks; then the fine bales of cotton and tobacco, and such like things, and the pipes of wine, and the puncheons of rum, and the casks of brandy, and the kegs of Hollands that came ashore! Dunbeg Bay was a little estate to the Doghertys.

Not but they were kind and humane to a distressed sailor, if ever one had the good luck to get to land; and many a time indeed did Jack put out in his little *corragh* (which, though not quite equal to honest Andrew Hennessy's canvas life-boat, would breast the billows like any gannet), to lend a hand towards bringing off the crew from a wreck. But when the ship had gone to pieces, and the crew were lost, who would blame Jack for picking up all he could find?

"And who is the worse of it?" said he. "For as to the king, God bless him! everybody knows he's rich enough already without getting what's floating in the sea."

Jack was a good-natured, jolly fellow. No other, sure, could ever have coaxed Biddy Mahony to quit her father's snug and warm house in the middle of the town of Ennis, and go so many miles off to live among the rocks, with the seals and sea-gulls for next-door neighbours. But Biddy knew that Jack was the man for a woman who wished to be comfortable and happy; for, to say nothing of the fish, Jack had the supplying

of half the gentlemen's houses of the country with the *Godsends* that came into the bay. She was right in her choice; for no woman ate, drank, or slept better, or made a prouder appearance at chapel on Sundays, than Mrs. Dogherty.

Many a strange sight did Jack see, and many a strange sound did he hear, but nothing daunted him. So far was he from being afraid of Merrows, or such beings, that the first wish of his heart was to meet with one. Jack had heard they were mighty like Christians, and luck had always come out of an acquaintance with them. Never, therefore, did he dimly discern the Merrows moving along the face of the waters in their robes of mist, but he made direct for them; and many a scolding did Biddy, in her own quiet way, bestow upon Jack for spending his whole day at sea, and bringing home no fish. Little did poor Biddy know the fish Jack was after!

It was rather annoying to Jack that, though living in a place where the Merrows were as plenty as lobsters, he never could get a right view of one. What vexed him more was that both his father and grandfather had often and often seen them; and he even remembered hearing, when a child, how his grandfather, who was the first of the family that had settled down at the creek, had been so intimate with a Merrow that, only for fear of vexing the priest, he would have had him stand for one of his children.

Fortune at length began to think it was only right that Jack should know as much as his father and grandfather. Accordingly, on a day when he had strolled farther than usual along the coast to the northward, as he turned a point, he saw something, like to nothing he had ever seen before, perched upon a rock at a little distance out to sea. It looked green in the body, as well as he could discern at that distance, and he would have

sworn, only the thing was impossible, that it had a cocked hat in its hand. Jack stood for a good half-hour straining his eyes, and wondering at it, and all the time the thing did not stir hand or foot. At last Jack's patience was quite worn out, and he gave a loud whistle and a hail, when the Merrow started up, put the cocked hat on its head, and dived head foremost, from the rock.

Jack's curiosity being excited, he constantly directed his steps towards the point; but could never get a glimpse of the sea-gentleman with the cocked hat; and with thinking and thinking about the matter, he began at last to fancy he had been only dreaming. One very rough day, however, when the sea was running mountains high, Jack Dogherty determined to give a look at the Merrow's rock (for he had always chosen a fine day before), and then he saw the strange thing cutting capers upon the top of the rock, and diving down, and coming up, and diving down again.

Jack had now only to choose his time (that is, a good blowing day), and he might see the man of the sea as often as he pleased. This, however, did not satisfy him—"much will have more"; he wished now to get acquainted with the Merrow, and even in this he succeeded. One tremendous blustering day, before he got to the point whence he had a view of the Merrow's rock, the storm came on so furiously that Jack was obliged to take shelter in one of the caves which are numerous along the coast; and there, to his astonishment, he saw sitting before him a thing with green hair, long green teeth, a red nose, and pig's eyes. It had a fish's tail, legs with scales on them, and short arms like fins. It wore no clothes, but had the cocked hat under its arm, and seemed to be thinking very seriously about something.

Jack, with all his courage, was a little daunted; but now or never, thought he; so up he went boldly to the

cogitating fishman, took off his hat, and made his best bow.

"Your servant, sir," said Jack.

"Your servant, kindly, Jack Dogherty," answered the Merrow.

"To be sure, then, how well your honour knows my name!" said Jack.

"Is it I not know your name, Jack Dogherty? Why, man, I knew your grandfather long before he was married to Judy Regan, your grandmother! Ah, Jack, Jack, I was fond of that grandfather of yours; he was a mighty worthy man in his time: I never met his match above or below, before or since, for sucking in a shellful of brandy. I hope, my boy," said the old fellow, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, "I hope you're his own grandson!"

"Never fear me for that," said Jack; "if my mother had only reared me on brandy, 'tis myself that would be a sucking infant to this hour!"

"Well, I like to hear you talk so manly; you and I must be better acquainted, if it were only for your grandfather's sake. But, Jack, that father of yours was not the thing! he had no head at all."

"I'm sure," said Jack, "since your honour lives down under the water, you must be obliged to drink a power to keep any heat in you in such a cruel, damp, *could* place. Well, I've often heard of Christians drinking like fishes; and might I be so bold as ask where you get the spirits?"

"Where do you get them yourself, Jack?" said the Merrow, twitching his red nose between his forefinger and thumb.

"Hubbubboo," cries Jack, "now I see how it is; but I suppose, sir, your honour has got a fine dry cellar below to keep them in."

"Let me alone for the cellar," said the Merrow with a knowing wink of his left eye.

"I'm sure," continued Jack, "it must be mighty well worth looking at."

"You may say that, Jack," said the Merrow; "and if you meet me here next Monday, just at this time of the day, we will have a little more talk with one another about the matter."

Jack and the Merrow parted the best friends in the world. On Monday they met, and Jack was not a little surprised to see that the Merrow had two cocked hats with him, one under each arm.

"Might I take the liberty to ask, sir," said Jack, "why your honour has brought the two hats with you to-day? You would not, sure, be going to give me one of them, to keep for the *curiosity* of the thing?"

"No, no, Jack," said he, "I don't get my hats so easily, to part with them that way; but I want you to come down and dine with me, and I brought you the hat to dine with."

"Lord bless and preserve us!" cried Jack, in amazement, "would you want me to go down to the bottom of the salt sea ocean? Sure, I'd be smothered and choked up with the water, to say nothing of being drowned! And what would poor Biddy do for me, and what would she say?"

"And what matter what she says, you *pinkeen?* Who cares for Biddy's squalling? It's long before your grandfather would have talked in that way. Many's the time he stuck that same hat on his head, and dived down boldly after me; and many's the snug bit of dinner and good shellful of brandy he and I have had together below, under the water."

"Is it really, sir, and no joke?" said Jack; "why, then, sorrow from me for ever and a day after, if I'll be a bit worse man nor my grandfather was! Here

goes—but play me fair now. Here's neck or nothing!" cried Jack.

"That's your grandfather all over," said the old fellow; "so come along, then, and do as I do."

They both left the cave, walked into the sea, and then swam a piece until they got to the rock. The Merrow climbed to the top of it, and Jack followed him. On the far side it was as straight as the wall of a house, and the sea beneath looked so deep that Jack was almost cowed.

"Now, do you see, Jack," said the Merrow: "just put this hat on your head, and mind to keep your eyes wide open. Take hold of my tail, and follow after me, and you'll see what you'll see."

In he dashed, and in dashed Jack after him boldly. They went and they went, and Jack thought they'd never stop going. Many a time did he wish himself sitting at home by the fireside with Biddy. Yet where was the use of wishing now, when he was so many miles, as he thought, below the waves of the Atlantic? Still he held hard by the Merrow's tail, slippery as it was; and, at last, to Jack's great surprise, they got out of the water, and he actually found himself on dry land at the bottom of the sea. They landed just in front of a nice house that was slated very neatly with oyster shells! and the Merrow, turning about to Jack, welcomed him down.

Jack could hardly speak, what with wonder, and what with being out of breath with travelling so fast through the water. He looked about him and could see no living things, barring crabs and lobsters, of which there were plenty walking leisurely about on the sand. Overhead was the sea like a sky, and the fishes like birds swimming about in it.

"Why don't you speak, man?" said the Merrow. "I dare say you had no notion that I had such a snug

little concern here as this? Are you smothered, or choked, or drowned, or are you fretting after Biddy, eh?"

"Oh! not myself, indeed," said Jack, showing his teeth with a good-humoured grin, "but who in the world would ever have thought of seeing such a thing?"

"Well, come along, and let's see what they've got for us to eat."

Jack really was hungry, and it gave him no small pleasure to perceive a fine column of smoke rising from the chimney, announcing what was going on within. Into the house he followed the Merrow, and there he saw a good kitchen, right well provided with everything. There was a noble dresser, and plenty of pots and pans, with two young Merrows cooking. His host then led him into the room, which was furnished shabbily enough. Not a table or a chair was there in it; nothing but planks and logs of wood to sit on, and eat off. There was, however, a good fire blazing upon the hearth—a comfortable sight to Jack.

"Come now, and I'll show you where I keep—you know what," said the Merrow, with a sly look; and opening a little door, he led Jack into a fine cellar, filled with pipes, and kegs, and hogsheads, and barrels.

"What do you say to that, Jack Dogherty? Eh, maybe a body can't live snug under the water?"

"Never the doubt of that," said Jack, with a convincing smack of his under lip, that he really thought what he said.

They went back to the room, and found dinner laid. There was no tablecloth, to be sure—but what matter? It was not always Jack had one at home. The dinner would have been no discredit to the first house of the country on a fast day. The choicest of fish, and no wonder, was there. Turbots, and sturgeons, and soles, and lobsters, and oysters, and twenty other kinds, were

on the planks at once, and plenty of the best of foreign spirits. The wines, the old fellow said, were too cold for his stomach.

Jack ate and drank till he could eat no more: then, taking up a shell of brandy, "Here's to your honour's good health, sir," said he; "though, begging your pardon, it's mighty odd that as long as we've been acquainted I don't know your name yet."

"That's true, Jack," replied he; "I never thought of it before, but better late than never. My name's Coomara."

"And a mighty decent name it is," cried Jack, taking another shellful: "here's to your good health, Coomara, and may ye live these fifty years to come!"

"Fifty years!" repeated Coomara; "I'm obliged to you, indeed! If you had said five hundred, it would have been something worth the wishing."

"By the laws, sir," cries Jack, "*youz* live to a powerful age here under the water! You knew my grandfather, and he's dead and gone better than these sixty years. I'm sure it must be a healthy place to live in."

"No doubt of it; but come, Jack, keep the liquor stirring."

Shell after shell did they empty, and to Jack's exceeding surprise, he found the drink never got into his head, owing, I suppose, to the sea being over them, which kept their noddles cool.

Old Coomara got exceedingly comfortable, and sung several songs; but Jack, if his life had depended on it, never could remember more than

Rum fum boodle boo,
Ripple dipple nitty dob;
Dumdoo doodle coo,
Raffle taffle chittiboo!

It was the chorus to one of them; and, to say the truth, nobody that I know has ever been able to pick any par-

ticular meaning out of it; but that, to be sure, is the case with many a song nowadays.

At length said he to Jack, "Now, my dear boy, if you follow me, I'll show you my *curiosities!*" He opened a little door, and led Jack into a large room, where Jack saw a great many odds and ends that Coomara had picked up at one time or another. What chiefly took his attention, however, were things like lobster-pots ranged on the ground along the wall.

"Well, Jack, how do you like my *curiosities?*" said old Coo.

"Upon my *sowkins,** sir," said Jack, "they're mighty well worth the looking at; but might I make so bold as to ask what these things like lobster-pots are?"

"Oh! the Soul Cages, is it?"

"The what? sir!"

"These things here that I keep the souls in."

"*Arrah!* what souls, sir?" said Jack in amazement; "sure the fish have no souls in them?"

"Oh! no," replied Coo, quite coolly, "that they have not; but these are the souls of drowned sailors."

"The Lord preserve us from all harm!" muttered Jack, "how in the world did you get them?"

"Easily enough: I've only, when I see a good storm coming on, to set a couple of dozen of these, and then, when the sailors are drowned and the souls get out of them under the water, the poor things are almost perished to death, not being used to the cold; so they make into my pots for shelter, and then I have them snug, and fetch them home, and keep them here dry and warm; and is it not well for them, poor souls, to get into such good quarters?"

Jack was so thunderstruck he did not know what to say, so he said nothing. They went back into the dining room, and had a little more brandy, which was ex-

* *Sowkins,* diminutive of soul.

cellent, and then, as Jack knew that it must be getting late, and as Biddy might be uneasy, he stood up, and said he thought it was time for him to be on the road.

"Just as you like, Jack ," said Coo, "but take a *duc an durrus* * before you go; you've a cold journey before you."

Jack knew better manners than to refuse the parting glass. "I wonder," said he, "will I be able to make out my way home?"

"What should ail you," said Coo, "when I'll show you the way?"

Out they went before the house, and Coomara took one of the cocked hats, and put it upon Jack's head the wrong way, and then lifted him up on his shoulder that he might launch him up into the water.

"Now," says he, giving him a heave, "you'll come up in the same spot you came down; and, Jack, mind and throw me back the hat."

He canted Jack off his shoulder, and up he shot like a bubble—whirr, whirr, whiz—away he went through the water, till he came to the very rock he had jumped off, where he found a landing-place, and then in he threw the hat, which sunk like a stone.

The sun was going down in the beautiful sky of a calm summer's evening. *Feascor* was seen dimly twinkling in the cloudless heaven, a solitary star, and the waves of the Atlantic flashed in a golden flood of light. So Jack, perceiving it was late, set off home; but when he got there, not a word did he say to Biddy of where he had spent his day.

The state of the poor souls cooped up in the lobster-pots gave Jack a great deal of trouble, and how to release them cost him a great deal of thought. He at first had a mind to speak to the priest about the matter. But what could the priest do, and what did Coo care for

* *Recte, deoch àn dorrus*—door-drink or stirrup-cup.

the priest? Besides, Coo was a good sort of an old fellow, and did not think he was doing any harm. Jack had a regard for him, too, and it also might not be much to his credit if it were known that he used to go dine with Merrows. On the whole, he thought his best plan would be to ask Coo to dinner, and to make him drunk, if he was able, and then to take the hat and go down and turn up the pots. It was, first of all, necessary, however, to get Biddy out of the way; for Jack was prudent enough, as she was a woman, to wish to keep the thing secret from her.

Accordingly, Jack grew mighty pious all of a sudden, and said to Biddy that he thought it would be for the good of both their souls if she was to take her rounds at Saint John's Well, near Ennis. Biddy thought so too, and accordingly off she set one fine morning at day dawn, giving Jack a strict charge to have an eye to the place. The coast being clear, away went Jack to the rock to give the appointed signal to Coomara, which was throwing a big stone into the water. Jack threw, and up sprang Coo!

"Good morning, Jack," said he; "what do you want with me?"

"Just nothing at all to speak about, sir," returned Jack, "only to come and take a bit of dinner with me, if I might make so free as to ask you, and sure I'm now after doing so."

"It's quite agreeable, Jack, I assure you; what's your hour?"

"Any time that's most convenient to you, sir—say one o'clock, that you may go home, if you wish, with the daylight."

"I'll be with you," said Coo, "never fear me."

Jack went home, and dressed a noble fish dinner, and got out plenty of his best foreign spirits, enough, for that matter, to make twenty men drunk. Just to

the minute came Coo, with his cocked hat under his arm. Dinner was ready, they sat down, and ate and drank away manfully. Jack, thinking of the poor souls below in the pots, plied old Coo well with brandy, and encouraged him to sing, hoping to put him under the table, but poor Jack forgot that he had not the sea over his own head to keep it cool. The brandy got into it, and did his business for him, and Coo reeled off home, leaving his entertainer as dumb as a haddock on a Good Friday.

Jack never woke till the next morning, and then he was in a sad way. "'Tis to no use for me thinking to make that old Rapparee drunk," said Jack, "and how in this world can I help the poor souls out of the lobster-pots?" After ruminating nearly the whole day, a thought struck him. "I have it," says he, slapping his knee; "I'll be sworn that Coo never saw a drop of *poteen,* as old as he is, and that's the *thing* to settle him! Oh! then, is not it well that Biddy will not be home these two days yet; I can have another twist at him."

Jack asked Coo again, and Coo laughed at him for having no better head, telling him he'd never come up to his grandfather.

"Well, but try me again," said Jack, "and I'll be bail to drink you drunk and sober, and drunk again."

"Anything in my power," said Coo, "to oblige you."

At this dinner Jack took care to have his own liquor well watered, and to give the strongest brandy he had to Coo. At last says he, "Pray, sir, did you ever drink any poteen?—any real mountain dew?"

"No," says Coo; "what's that, and where does it come from?"

"Oh, that's a secret," said Jack, "but it's the right stuff—never believe me again, if 'tis not fifty times as good as brandy or rum either. Biddy's brother just

sent me a present of a little drop, in exchange for some brandy, and as you're an old friend of the family, I kept it to treat you with."

"Well, let's see what sort of thing it is," said Coomara.

The *poteen* was the right sort. It was first-rate, and had the real smack upon it. Coo was delighted: he drank and he sang *Rum bum boodle boo* over and over again; and he laughed and he danced, till he fell on the floor fast asleep. Then Jack, who had taken good care to keep himself sober, snapt up the cocked hat—ran to the rock—leaped in, and soon arrived at Coo's habitation.

All was as still as a churchyard at midnight—not a Merrow, old or young, was there. In he went and turned up the pots, but nothing did he see, only he heard a sort of a little whistle or chirp as he raised each of them. At this he was surprised, till he recollected what the priests had often said, that nobody living could see the soul, no more than they could see the wind or the air. Having now done what he could for them, he set the pots as they were before, and sent a blessing after the poor souls to speed them on their journey wherever they were going. Jack now began to think of returning; he put the hat on, as was right, the wrong way; but when he got out he found the water so high over his head that he had no hopes of ever getting up into it, now that he had not old Coomara to give him a lift. He walked about looking for a ladder, but not one could he find, and not a rock was there in sight. At last he saw a spot where the sea hung rather lower than anywhere else, so he resolved to try there. Just as he came to it, a big cod happened to put down his tail. Jack made a jump and caught hold of it, and the cod, all in amazement, gave a bounce and pulled Jack up. The minute the hat touched the water away Jack was

whisked, and up he shot like a cork, dragging the poor cod, that he forgot to let go, up with him tail foremost. He got to the rock in no time, and without a moment's delay hurried home, rejoicing in the good deed he had done.

Meanwhile, there was fine work at home; for our friend Jack had hardly left the house on his soul-freeing expedition, when back came Biddy from her soul-saving one to the well. When she entered the house and saw the things lying *thrie-na-helah* * on the table before her—"Here's a pretty job!" said she; "that blackguard of mine—what ill-luck I had ever to marry him! He has picked up some vagabond or other, while I was praying for the good of his soul, and they've been drinking all the *poteen* that my own brother gave him, and all the spirits, to be sure, that he was to have sold to his honour." Then hearing an outlandish kind of a grunt, she looked down, and saw Coomara lying under the table. "The blessed Virgin help me," shouted she, "if he has not made a real beast of himself with drink! Well, well, I've often heard of a man making a beast of himself with drink! Oh hone, oh hone!—Jack, honey, what will I do with you, or what will I do without you? How can any decent woman ever think of living with a beast?"

With such like lamentations Biddy rushed out of the house, and was going she knew not where, when she heard the well-known voice of Jack singing a merry tune. Glad enough was Biddy to find him safe and sound, and not turned into a thing that was neither fish nor flesh. Jack was obliged to tell her all, and Biddy, though she had half a mind to be angry with him for not telling her before, owned that he had done a great service to the poor souls. Back they both went most lovingly to the house, and Jack wakened up Coo-

* *Tri-na-cheile, literally through other—i.e.,* higgledy-piggledy.

mara; and, perceiving the old fellow to be rather dull, he bid him not to be cast down, for 'twas many a good man's case; said it all came of his not being used to the *poteen*, and recommended him, by way of cure, to swallow a hair of the dog that bit him. Coo, however, seemed to think he had had quite enough. He got up, quite out of sorts, and without having the manners to say one word in the way of civility, he sneaked off to cool himself by a jaunt through the salt water. He never missed the souls.

(1)

THE END

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